First Call for Children

'The essential needs of children should be given priority in bad times as well as good' — *Plan of Action, World Summit for Children*

A UNICEF Quarterly/1995/No. 3 July-September 1995

UNICEF toughens stance on companies hiring children

By Lisa Krug

UNICEF announced a new procurement policy on child labour in May 1995, pledging to purchase materials and supplies only from companies that do not exploit child labour. The policy, UNICEF's toughest stance yet on child labour, is one of the first signed by the new Executive Director, Carol Bellamy. She made it clear in an accompanying statement that "UNICEF does not tolerate any form of exploitation of children."

The new procurement policy applies to all employed children, including those beyond the age of primary schooling in apprenticeships. To sell products and services to UNICEF, companies must now comply with national laws and regulations that cover minimum age of employment, wages and working conditions of children, as well as those that cover mandatory education.

Furthermore, these laws and regulations must adhere to the principles established in article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by 176 countries as of mid-June 1995. The UNICEF Representative in each country is required to assess the local situation and evaluate the child labour practices of local companies, keeping in mind "the best interests of the child," as required by the Convention.

"This policy is consistent with UNICEF's active role in implementing the Convention, and it links our programme activities with our supply procurement," says Manzoor Ahmed, Associate Director of UNICEF's Programme Division. "But we are not imposing unilateral rules on our field offices; we are establishing a policy and asking them to implement it as appropriate to the situation in each country."

Inter-agency collaboration

In October 1995, UNICEF will join several United Nations and other organizations in Kathmandu to formulate a comprehensive child labour policy. The Consultation on Child Labour, co-chaired by UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation, will also include UNESCO, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, non-governmental organizations, academics and other concerned groups. "Inter-agency collaboration will give UNICEF's procurement policy its strength," says Maria Gabriella Lay, UNICEF Public Affairs Officer, who participated in drafting the policy. "It's the next logical step."

UNICEF's substantial purchasing power is also bound to give its procurement policy muscle. The organization buys US$380 million in supplies each year from industrialized and developing

continued on page 2

UNICEF/1995/Lemoyne

Literacy has been one of the most dramatic gains in the status of women during the past two decades.

Women: Equality proves elusive, despite measurable gains

By Catharine Way

Almost 20 years after the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), there is no question that women are on the world's agenda. But, although talk has translated into measurable gains, they are precarious, and the fundamental change many had hoped for has yet to take place. On the eve of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, that is the conclusion of those who have worked on behalf of women's advancement during those two decades.

"The record is very mixed over the past 20 years," says Dr. Rounaq Jahan, a political scientist and author of a recently published book, *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development.* "The level of awareness concerning gender issues has increased. But there has been little progress in certain issues such as poverty. The disparities between the North and the South and between the rich and the poor have increased."

Her view is shared by many, including Mim Kelber, co-founder of the Women's Environment and Development Organization, or WEDO.

"The most encouraging thing that has happened in the past 20 years is the exponential growth of the international women's movement," says Ms. Kelber. "Women from all over the world have been getting together to describe and assert their needs and demand a share in decision making. However, the basic figures remain that women are a majority of the poor and the illiterate, very much restricted by male-dominated traditions and religions."

There is no question that significant strides have been made. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women came into force in 1980 and has been ratified by 143 countries. Development agencies have established programmes, and budgets, in support of women's advancement, and the numbers of women employed by these agencies in professional categories has gone up.

continued on page 6

'Rugmark' aims for carpets made without child labour

Faced with growing pressure from potential customers concerned about child labour, the Indian carpet industry has established a mechanism aimed at certifying that children have not been involved in the production of rugs. Manufacturers and suppliers who comply with the rules are entitled to put the 'Rugmark' label on their carpets, signifying child-labour-free.

"Rugmark is exerting pressure on the US$584 million carpet industry to eliminate child labour," says Richard Young, Chief of Community Development for UNICEF New Delhi. "The concept is ambitious, but the implementation is difficult, given the number of carpets produced in India."

Companies that join the initiative must commit themselves in a legally binding way not to employ children under 14 and to pay workers at least the official minimum wage. In traditional family enterprises, children under 14 may assist their parents but must attend school regularly.

The initiative, begun in 1994, is operating in three states where carpets are manufactured for export or that are known to be sources of child labour for the industry: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan. So far, 25 manufacturers have been licensed to use the label and another 35 are finalizing their applications.

Although there are 3,000 registered carpet manufacturers and exporters in India, Rugmark is focusing on the larger manufacturers. The initiative is administered by a private not-for-profit foundation made up of manufacturers, exporters, NGOs and development organizations, including UNICEF.

India's Ministry of Textiles and the Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) have recently announced a plan to introduce a similar certification system more widely in the industry. The new Chairperson of the Rugmark Foundation Board of Directors, former Union Minister for the Environment Ms. Maneka Gandhi, is to negotiate with the Textile Ministry and the CEPC to unify these initiatives. As a result, says Mr. Young, "Rugmark should 'go to scale' in one form or another."

continued on page 2

INSIDE

Morocco triumphing over diarrhoea 3

How wealthy nations shortchange children 4

Implementing the Convention 5

NGO Action for Children 7-10

A new 'Meena' for East Africa 11

Fighting female genital mutilation in France 11

Treating Burundi's 'hidden' wounds 13

Tougher stance

continued from page 1

countries, and both groups employ child labourers.

But UNICEF's decision will make its greatest impact in developing countries, where 95 per cent of all child labourers live. In India, for example, where 50 to 60 million children work full time and miss school, suppliers earned around US$2.5 million from UNICEF contracts in 1994.

As many as 200 million of the world's children under 15 spend most of their waking hours at work, according to the *1995 UNICEF Annual Report*. "Horror stories of child trafficking and prostitution, forced labour and physical abuse in sweatshops, mines, factories, brickyards and domestic servitude are legion," the report says.

But UNICEF is quick to point out that not all children who work are exploited. In many countries, children work in and outside the home to help support their families. They haul water, collect firewood, plant and harvest crops and care for siblings. Outside the home, they get paid to do a variety of tasks, from working the fields to sewing garments and selling merchandise.

UNICEF-5516/Isaac

Not all child work is exploitative: Boys learn to make steel drums as part of a skills-training project.

Valuable skills

Often, the work provides valuable skills. It becomes exploitative, however, when it keeps children out of school or compromises their health or dignity. UNICEF calls this kind of harmful activity 'exploitative child labour' to differentiate it from 'child work', which the organization views as a necessary activity for many children in poor countries.

Article 32 of the Convention seeks to protect children from work "likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development."

The Convention urges countries to create and enforce legislation regulating minimum working age, hours and conditions of child employment. Though many governments have passed laws regulating child labour, not all laws comply with the Convention, and those laws that do comply are not always enforced.

"We are not instituting the procurement policy to condemn governments," says Ms. Lay. "We are merely alerting them to the fact that children's working conditions in their countries need to be addressed. The private sector has begun to offer working children education and nourishment. We want to induce them to take more of these alternatives."

In recent years, UNICEF has worked with both industry and governments to protect children from abusive working conditions. In India, for example, UNICEF is working with the carpet industry and NGOs on the 'Rugmark' initiative, aimed at expanding markets for child-labour-free products. *(See story, page 1.)* The organization has also worked with governments, NGOs, the private sector and other UN agencies to promote change at the local level.

"This procurement policy is not entirely new," says Nancy Cain, Chief of the UNICEF Supply Section in New York, who helped draft the document. "It merely formalizes an unofficial practice that has been going on in field offices for some time." The bulk of UNICEF purchases are made by country offices, she says, and they avoid companies that exploit children.

Spot checks

Now, UNICEF Representatives have been given the official go-ahead to look into the labour practices of local companies doing business with UNICEF. Under the new policy, Representatives will oversee spot checks of the workplace, getting help from non-governmental and other organizations that have child labour expertise. All information will be forwarded to UNICEF's Supply Division in Copenhagen, which will evaluate purchases at the international level.

UNICEF Representatives have been instructed to write letters to companies that flout government and Convention guidelines, informing them of UNICEF's purchasing policy and its commitment to protecting children. A similar statement of policy will be included in all UNICEF purchase orders and bidding documents.

Though an important step, the new procurement policy is no magic bullet. "The policy will be effective only if UNICEF works with governments and NGOs to create and sustain education opportunities for children," says Ms. Lay.

In addition to promoting education, UNICEF plans to help child labourers in a variety of ways. The organization will support programmes that assist families of working children; that provide education, skills-training, food and shelter to children who leave exploitative jobs; and that contribute to a country's overall development.

Lisa Krug is consultant editor of the UNICEF Features Service.

Rugmark initiative

continued from page 1

The Rugmark initiative was conceived by the carpet industry and NGOs as a marketing tool aimed at maintaining export possibilities; it does not act as a regulatory body or replace any government authority. But members of the Foundation must get affidavits from their subcontractors that they work without child labour and they must agree to random checks at their looms by a team of inspectors recruited by Rugmark. Spot checks are also conducted by NGOs.

The inspection system has been strengthened since January 1995, notes Mr. Young, although it is not yet up to the level UNICEF would like. A Rugmark regional office has been established in the 'carpet belt', more rigorous qualifications for inspectors have been imposed, the number of inspectors has been increased and a regular training programme has been established. The label carries a serial number so the origins of each carpet can be traced.

A levy of 2 per cent of the value of the carpets is imposed on importers, the proceeds of which go into a fund earmarked for the rehabilitation of children released from the carpet industry and for preventive measures to stem the flow of children under 14 into the industry. UNICEF is currently developing a proposal for the use of these funds for rehabilitation and education.

Similar initiatives are planned in Nepal and Pakistan.

Tulane to offer social mobilization course

A certificate course in social mobilization will be offered in the summer of 1996 at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The intensive three-month programme is intended for mid-career professionals working in development. Its three prongs — management and policy; communication and education; and research, evaluation and analysis — aim to give officials in developing countries, especially those working in public health, the practical skills needed to transform development goals into societal action. Students completing the course earn 18 credits towards a master's degree.

Jack Ling, Director of the International Communication Enhancement Center at Tulane and founder of the programme, says this is the third and last time the course will be offered as an intensive certificate course in the United States.

"Our goal all along was to create a prototype course that would help developing countries formulate their own programmes," says Mr. Ling, a former UNICEF official. "We need to build the capacity in the developing countries."

Already that has happened. Similar programmes are currently under way at colleges or communication training institutes in Benin, Ecuador, Ethiopia and the Philippines. A social mobilization course is being developed in Tanzania, and similar courses are being considered in Bahrain, China, Senegal and Viet Nam.

A maximum of 25 participants are accepted into the intensive programme, which was developed with assistance from UNICEF and additional support from UNDP, UNFPA, WHO and USAID, (the United States Agency for International Development).

Informal exchange

The students take all their classes as a group, five to six hours a day, five days a week, and have ample opportunity for informal exchange. Half of each Friday is spent in 'reflective learning', discussing what has taken place during the previous week. The course is taught in seminar style, with extensive interaction between participants and instructors.

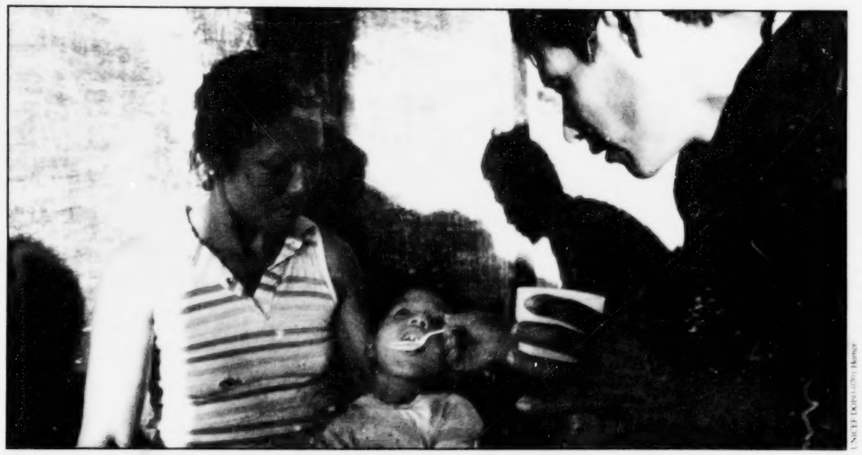
"Training people is the most sustainable effort you can undertake, because people do development, not machines."

— Jack Ling

The course responds to what Mr. Ling calls the three main criticisms of development activities: they are not sufficiently sustainable, capacity-building or integrated.

"Training people is the most sustainable effort you can undertake, because people do development, not machines," he says. "And this programme is capacity-building in that it trains people to do things themselves, rather than call in the experts." He adds that, with 12 to 15 faculty members brought in from various sectors of development, it also provides ample opportunities for integration.

"My hope is for a network of universities teaching this around the world," he says.



NICEF/Dalmasso/Reuter

A Peruvian man treats a child with ORT in a community health centre.

Morocco: With massive effort, triumphing over diarrhoea

Diarrhoeal dehydration is the leading cause of death among children under five in Morocco today, accounting for a quarter of all child deaths. Yet over the past three years, severe dehydration among children with diarrhoea has declined significantly, largely the result of an increase in the use of oral rehydration therapy (ORT) from 13 per cent in 1991 to 60 per cent by the end of 1994. Morocco is well on its way to achieving the mid-decade goal of 80 per cent use of ORT together with continued feeding.

By Alexia Lewnes and Sérgio Antonio Guimaraes

The battle against diarrhoeal diseases in Morocco is not a new one, yet only recently has it become a national priority. Today, all levels of government, the media, NGOs and community members have joined the fight. "The doors would be closed without the commitment of high-level decision makers," says Dr. Mohamed Salah, Health Officer for UNICEF Rabat. "They were the ones who decided to accelerate programme activities, design a new communication strategy and involve the private sector."

Backed by strong support from King Hassan II, in 1992 a targeted national strategy was developed and annual goals were set. The programme aimed to reduce child mortality related to diarrhoeal diseases by 30 per cent each year over three years and increase the rate of ORT use to 60 per cent in 1994 and 80 per cent in 1995.

In a departure from previous years, the control of diarrhoeal diseases (CDD) became a job, not just for the Ministry of Public Health, but for all ministries, as well as international organizations, the private sector, and local and national NGOs.

The national CDD programme also called for the establishment of provincial plans of action, enabling the provinces to determine their local needs and devise their own solutions. "The national plan of action provides the framework and is necessary for consistency across the country," says Dr. Ahmed Ljazouli, Medical Director of Al Haouz province. "But the solutions have to respond to the local needs and come from the community."

Ensuring that ORT became an integral part of the public health care system became an immediate priority. "It was essential to convince health workers of the effectiveness of ORT to the degree that they would use it for their own children," says Dr. Abderrahamane Zahi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Public Health. "You can't convince others when you are not convinced yourself."

Systematic training

Over the last few years, an ambitious programme has systematically provided training in case management to 1,426 doctors and 5,000 paramedical personnel in the public health system. By the end of 1993, each of the country's 2,200 hospitals, health centres and local clinics and 2,000 mobile health units had on staff at least one person correctly trained in diarrhoea case management as well as the necessary communication skills to train mothers in their community.

An additional 2,200 ORT 'corners' were established in health centres and hospitals — designated areas equipped with ORS packets, demonstration tools, wall charts and education and communication materials.

Since the home is the main battleground in the war against diarrhoeal diseases, equipping families with the necessary skills to treat diarrhoea and its complications is essential to the programme's success.

The national communication strategy uses multiple channels to ensure that mothers understand the ORT message, are willing to use it and are able to prepare and administer it safely at home.

"Television sounds the alarm," says Nasser Laraki, President of Toro, the private communication agency that assisted the Ministry of Public Health in designing the communication strategy. "Face-to-face communication drives the message home."

More than 1 million reached

Health workers incorporate diarrhoea control messages into all maternal and child health activities at health facilities. Local NGOs and religious groups distribute educational materials and demonstrate ORS preparation at weekly *souks* (markets) and *moussems* (religious celebrations). Home visits further reinforce the critical health messages. Since 1992, 12,000 health teams, 3,000 young women from the Ministry of Youth and Sports and 250 female agricultural workers, as well as thousands of Moroccan Scouts, have travelled door-to-door, reaching more than 1 million mothers with children under five each year.

Year-round communication efforts are further reinforced with intensive campaigns, lasting two weeks and longer in high-risk areas, during the summer, when safe water is in shorter supply and diarrhoea incidence goes up. During the campaigns, hundreds of articles appear in daily and weekly newspapers, while public service announcements and interviews with ministers, medical professors and health personnel are broadcast on national and regional radio in local dialects.

continued on page 14

The Scouts of Safi promote ORT

Bus riders in the province of Safi were taken by surprise last year when members of the local chapter of the National Federation of Moroccan Scouts jumped on board and began handing out ORS packets and speaking about the dangers of diarrhoea and the virtues of ORT.

The bus campaign was one of many launched by the Scouts of Safi, which, like other Scout groups across the country, have developed imaginative activities to reach their community. For the past two years, the Scouts of Safi have staged puppet shows and plays in schools, on city streets and in weekly *souks*. They have travelled door-to-door to demonstrate to mothers the preparation of ORS and to explain how to prevent diarrhoea. They have even composed a song about its dangers. "All our activities encourage participation from the audience," says Boughi Zahir, Scout leader of Safi. The puppet shows tend to generate the largest response, he says.

While the Scouts have been active for years, only recently have they been recognized for their mobilization role. "We have been astounded by their capacity to reach the population through their songs, marionettes and sketches," says Dr. Abdelouahab Cherradi, Medical Director of Safi province. "The Scouts have always been here, but only now are we recognizing their potential."

Questionnaire reinforces ORT knowledge of Peru's families

By Sharon Slater

Every morning, after Zunilda Campos Rivera's husband and oldest son have left for work, after the five other children have set off to school, Ms. Campos settles down to oversee the small store she keeps in her home, her granddaughter at her side. But this day is special. She will close up shop at noon to undertake another crucial job: making the rounds of her neighbourhood to administer a questionnaire on the use of oral rehydration therapy.

The questionnaire is an extension of her responsibility for operating a community oral rehydration unit, or CORU, which provides ORT supplies and information to 50 families in her neighbourhood. In order for her home to become a CORU, Ms. Campos had to attend several hours of classes. Since then she has received a steady supply of educational materials and packets of oral rehydration salts (ORS). The questionnaire, begun in 1993, was devised as a tool to educate and to determine whether the CORU had made a difference in the community.

Mother's cooperation

Each January and June, at the beginning and end of the Peruvian diarrhoea 'season', volunteers like Ms. Campos visit each family in their CORU. They explain that everyone must be vigilant to prevent diarrhoea from becoming a major child health problem. The volunteer requests the mother's cooperation as part of the effort, and asks five simple questions:

1. The last time your child had diarrhoea, did you give him more, the same, or less liquids than usual, including breastmilk?

2. The last time your child had diarrhoea, did you give him more, the same or less food than usual, including breastmilk?

3. Can you tell me what this is (showing the mother an ORS sachet)?

4. Do you know how to prepare oral rehydration salts? (The answer is marked as 'yes' if the mother says that she dissolves the contents of the sachet in a litre of boiled water.)

5. How do you obtain ORS in your neighbourhood or community? (The choices given are: hospital or health centre; pharmacy; CORU or other.)

The questions are accompanied by illustrations that support the information: a smiling baby for correct answers, a sad-faced baby for incorrect ones.

The mother and the volunteer then review the mother's responses together, with the volunteer complimenting the mother on her correct responses and gently correcting her errors. The volunteer marks the replies in her notebook and leaves the questionnaire with the mother as an educational tool.

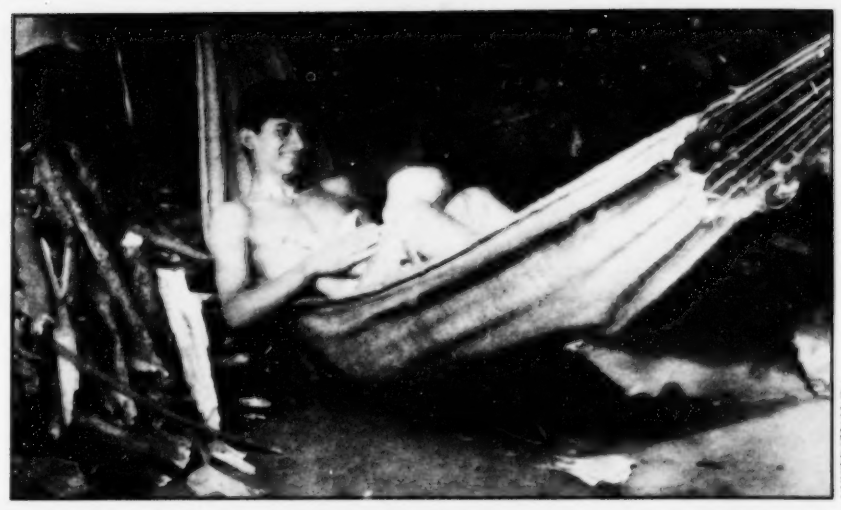
"This immediate feedback to the mother is the key element," says Dr. Nyi Nyi, Special Adviser to the UNICEF Executive Director. "It is a very effective dynamic."

As the volunteers make their visits at the beginning of the diarrhoea season, they also leave a sachet of ORS with each family, "for the next time."

"I've travelled with these volunteers

continued on page 12

Getting men involved



UNICEF/92-5/McGirr

Both fathers and children benefit when they spend more time together.

By Alexia Lewnes

Men have traditionally played a secondary role in families, and that trend has only been increased by recent demographic and economic changes. How to expand men's role was the focus of a seminar, 'Achieving gender equality in families: The role of males', held in May in Kingston (Jamaica). The 10-day seminar examined how men as household members and as fathers affect women and children in families throughout the world.

While research on families tends to focus on the links between mothers and their children, it has become increasingly clear that men must be incorporated into development efforts if the situation of all family members is to improve. As fathers and family members, both men's contributions and their failures to contribute to the family have a great impact on the health and development of young children.

Mother's growing role

Throughout the world, millions of children are growing up without the financial and emotional support of their fathers, according to a new Population Council report, which analyses demographic and household studies from countries worldwide. The report reveals that marriages are dissolving at an increasing rate, leaving many women to manage a variety of responsibilities on their own. Even in families where a father is present, women are carrying an increasing share of economic responsibility for their families as well as performing the traditional role of nurturing and child care.

"There should be joint responsibility for child care in which men and women share both the financial and emotional responsibility for raising children," said seminar participant Judith Bruce, Director of the Gender, Family and Development Programme at the Population Council, an international family planning research organization that analyses population issues and trends. "But the reality is that women, whether they are married or not, bear an unfair share of the burden of raising children today."

Stereotypes promote inequality

While the traditional role of women as homemakers and nurturers has expanded, in many societies a man's traditional role as provider has remained unchanged. "In Jamaica, a good father is someone who can provide financially for his children," said Janet Brown, Director of the Caribbean Child Development Centre at the University of the West Indies. "A mother is supposed to care for the children and the home. With increasing unemployment among men and an increasing number of women working, there is a lot of confusion about the role of men in the family." When tradition limits men's family role to that of financial provider and circumstances prevent men from fulfilling that role, they may lose their self-esteem and confidence. Some end up leaving their families.

Even when men don't leave, studies show that they are conspicuously absent in child-rearing and spend little time with their young children. A study of four-year-old children in 11 countries found that, on average, the children spent at least five of their waking hours under their mother's supervision and less than one hour under their father's supervision.

Females shoulder an unequal share of responsibility in the home from an early age. As young girls, they are socialized to submit to men and are denied opportunities for growth and development. In many areas, girls are often kept from school to care for younger siblings and perform household chores. As adults, they seldom have the same rights as men within the family. As a result, they often find themselves in unjust, sometimes violent partnerships, married to men who control their access to financial resources and even their sexuality and fertility.

Even when women contribute a substantial amount of income to their families, their improved earning power rarely increases their bargaining power within the family. "In many societies, men have very broad decision-making powers in the home, including allocation of resources for health care and medicine and education," said Patrice Engle, Chair of the Department of Psychology at California Polytechnic State University. "The father's role can make a tremendous difference in the life of a child and can dramatically influence child survival, growth and development."

Encouraging male nurturing

To increase the participation of men in families and to reduce gender inequality require that new roles and identities be explored for both men and women. "Fatherhood needs to be more broadly defined," said Ms. Engle. "We need to widen the male identity so that men can see themselves as nurturers as well as providers. Women also need to accept and encourage men in their new roles."

Participants agreed that redefining gender roles must start early. "We have to look at the role of men and women from a life cycle perspective — from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood," said Misrak Elias, UNICEF Senior Adviser on gender and development. While gender roles are largely defined within the family, seminar participants also examined how such roles are defined in schools as well as other social institutions and the media. It was agreed that these institutions could play a significant role in changing gender stereotypes.

All resources need to be mobilized to redress the imbalances that exist between males and females within families today. Governments at all levels, non-governmental institutions and private organizations need to make a clear commitment to the objective of increasing participation of men in the care of children. "The family, school and State all have to reinforce the same message," said Sreelakshmi Gururaja, UNICEF Project Officer for gender and development. "We need national governments to promote equality not just through legislation. They have to be part of the whole socialization process if we are going to institute a global change."

Alexia Lewnes is a consultant writer for UNICEF.

Dilemma for wealthy nations: How to put children first

The development of post-industrial societies has been harmful to children, argues Penelope Leach in her latest book, *Children First*. "In these final years of the twentieth century, Western States are well placed to help parents through their governments and institutions and through their opinion makers and media, but they do far less than they could," she writes. The reason, she says, is that parenting does not command sufficient social status.

Ms. Leach — author of several books on child development and host of a television programme, *Your Baby & Child* — advocates for making child-focused socio-economic policies available to everyone, not just the poor. She cites as examples countries such as Sweden, which treats children like citizens with rights. This strategy leads to such benefits as direct public funding of day care and shorter working hours for parents of children under eight.

"My main reason for writing the book was the sense that all post-industrial countries share a problem: how do we fit caring relationships in the modern economic world?" she said in an interview. "I didn't set out to write a book about children's rights. *Children First* is about our failure to incorporate children within our development of society."

She declined to extrapolate her findings to the developing countries, saying she did not feel she knew enough about other parts of the world and because "I dislike very much to generalize."

Nonetheless, she made some observations about the developing world, based on work she has done there, particularly in connection with "helping people see the price to be paid for 'westernization'," she said. "I want to make sure people realize that, although the goods are desirable, the costs are enormous and long-lasting."

Picking options

At the Earth Summit in Rio, she said, she was happy to hear people talking about the fact that one of the advantages of being at the beginning of the industrialization process is the option countries have to pick and choose those parts of the industrialization process they want. "It's better to have a shopping list than to buy wholesale from the United States," she said.

In 1989 Penelope Leach co-founded End Physical Punishment of Children, an NGO based in the United Kingdom. It is now worldwide, she said, "not because we've fought to make it worldwide, but because people in other countries have come to us." A branch of the organization has recently been launched in South Africa, which she called "a triumph, given that country's history."

She attributes part of the interest in the group to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. "Suddenly the most unexpected countries are getting in touch with us and saying, 'We have a problem with kids being beaten in school. How do we change people's attitudes?'"

The Convention is "enormously important," she said. "I think the moral commitment, given the number of countries that have signed and ratified, is enormous." Even in poor countries the Convention is valuable, she added, because it aims at minimal standards. "If there's food for anybody, children have a right to it," she said.

How hard to push?

However, she expressed some caution about how hard to push the Convention in countries where governments are less than enthusiastic about child rights. For example, she said, one country in Europe was 'taken to task' by the Committee on the Rights of the Child for, among other things, what it had failed to do for homeless children. After that, she said, "We had to be very careful not to lead the media into backing everyone into corners."

Ms. Leach believes industrialized countries could learn valuable lessons from some traditions of the developing nations, such as extended families.

"We don't really want to build extended families by having more children," she said, "but by developing networks. In India, where I was recently, there may be layers of obligation as well as friendship. Such as, 'My mother was helped by this man's grandmother and therefore it is automatic that, now their daughter wishes to come to the city, she will come and live with us.' As a westerner looking on, you may never realize that she is not a 'natural daughter' of the house".

But those extended families are breaking down in many areas because of the economic pull of cities. "Most westerners don't realize that one of the constraints on rural development is labour, which could be improved by the young men staying put — but then there would be no money for modernization," Ms. Leach said. The challenge facing societies in both the developing and the industrialized countries is to find the middle ground.

"The moral commitment of the Convention, given the number of countries that have ratified, is enormous."

— Penelope Leach

Beyond ratification: Implementing the Convention

South Africa: With ratification, the dawn of a new era

Convention: Ratified in 1995

Mahlamba'ndlopfu (dawn of a new era) has fittingly replaced Libertas as the name of South Africa's presidential mansion, as the country makes its transition to democratic government.

As part of this shift, the Government is taking strides to ensure the human rights of its citizens. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently established a human rights department, and a number of human rights instruments are being considered for signature and ratification. Those signed recently include the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Although reliable data are lacking and much child-related legislation is outdated, there is consensus that the problems of South Africa's children are too serious to wait for lengthy analysis.

Through consultations with key ministries, UNICEF Pretoria has played a crucial role in ensuring that children's rights are firmly embedded in the new Constitution. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been established as the framework for the first full UNICEF country programme (for the 1996-2000 period), and UNICEF is also working with the National Children's Rights Committee to ensure that the Convention is understood by all sectors of society.

Recent actions in support of child rights:

• The Convention was ratified by South Africa on the Day of the African Child (16 June 1995). The historic signing by President Nelson Mandela was transmitted by satellite to the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations, marking the highlight of the celebration of the Day of the African Child.

UNICEF/92-0407/Hollyman

• The goals of the World Summit for Children have been incorporated into the Government's Reconstruction and Development Programme.

• All political parties represented in the Constitutional Assembly met for a day to discuss how provisions of the Convention can be integrated into the new Constitution, now being drafted.

• Progress has been made on drafting a new Juvenile Justice Act.

• The Ministry of Population and Welfare and a variety of legal committees and task forces are reviewing other Acts that may be in contravention of the Convention and/or the Interim Constitution.

• The Convention has been summarized in simple language and published in a colourful booklet in five of the country's 11 official languages.

Editor's note: Now that most countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, attention is shifting to national initiatives in support of its implementation. This new page is devoted to those efforts. Please direct correspondence to Maissa Hamed, UNICEF House, H-6F, 3 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA; email: mhamed@igc.apc.org

Convention: Ratified in 1990

Nepal: Seeking opinions from the children

Nepal is preparing to report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on its activities to implement the Convention. As part of this effort, the country is seeking input from children to be incorporated into the final report.

Recent actions in support of child rights:

• In April, 29 children (10-16 years old) participated in a four-day workshop on the Convention, sponsored by INHURED International (a federation of NGOs working for children) and UNICEF. The delegates included working children, a street boy, a disabled girl, children from refugee communities and those from both urban English schools and rural Nepali schools. Adult facilitators informed them about Nepali law as it pertains to children as well as the rights incorporated in the Convention. The children discussed their experiences in terms of what they had learned about their rights. Upon returning home, the young delegates continued to discuss the Convention and national laws with their peers.

Later in the month, the children returned to Kathmandu, each with another child they had identified in their community, for the National Children's Seminar on the Convention. Having left the first workshop with a better understanding of child rights, they were able to express opinions about how those rights were being upheld in their communities. For six days they discussed the draft country report on the status of Convention implementation, which was summarized in a form understandable to children. They also discussed what they could do themselves to realize their rights. In addition, they met with the Prime Minister.

UNICEF is helping to compile their comments and is preparing suggestions for the Government on how to incorporate them into the country report.

Source: Links, *a publication of UNICEF Kathmandu.*

UNICEF/92-1272/Mario Lee

Convention: Ratified in 1990

Burkina Faso: Spreading the message

Burkina Faso was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention, and even earlier it had adopted a code in support of the family based on the Universal Declaration on the Rights of the Child of 1959. But laws in support of children are little known to the public, and there is a need to raise judges' awareness of the Convention. To educate its people on the Convention, the Government has undertaken novel approaches, many of them with support from UNICEF in collaboration with the Burkinabe Movement for Human Rights and Foster Parents Plan.

Recent actions in support of child rights:

• An advocacy kit on the rights of the child was produced and distributed nationwide to teachers, decision makers and the public. Its main purpose is to teach child rights in schools.

• National conferences were held in 10 cities for teachers, students, NGOs, women's associations and other groups on the Convention to inform people about child rights.

• A forum was convened to educate village elders about the Convention. Representatives of over 8,000 villages attended, and they in turn informed adults and children in their communities.

• Several public forums on the Convention were held at the Ouagadougou Pan-African Cinema Festival of 1993, whose theme was 'Democratization and Children'.

• Children participated in special television programmes and plays designed to introduce the Convention to people, whether or not they are literate.

• A brochure on the intermediate goals of Burkina Faso's national plan for implementation of the Convention was distributed to decision makers and community leaders.

• A training workshop on the Convention for the members of the Monitoring Committee of the National Programme of Action took place in June 1995.

UNICEF-WCARO

Convention: Ratified in 1992

Tunisia: High-level support for child rights

UNICEF 4166/Sprague

With the personal involvement of President Ben Ali and several high-level ministers, Tunisia has demonstrated its commitment to its children through a series of initiatives undertaken since ratifying the Convention. A delegation headed by the Minister of Youth and Childhood presented the country's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva in June 1995. One member of the Committee mentioned that Tunisia constituted a model Muslim State.

Recent actions in support of child rights:

• A two-year review of national legislation was undertaken to bring it in line with provisions of the Convention.

• After this review pointed out the need for legal protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, the Tunisian Council of Ministers adopted a Code for the Protection of the Child on 17 May 1995. In preparing the Code, national legal experts were mobilized and extensive consultations took place with sectoral ministries. Adoption of the Code was reported on the front pages of major national newspapers.

• A delegate for child protection has been appointed in each of the 23 governorates to oversee implementation of the Convention and the Code at the subnational level. The Government requested UNICEF assistance in drafting terms of reference for the delegates and training them to oversee implementation of the Convention.

• The High Council for the Child, consisting of government officials and representatives from NGOs, serves as a consultative organ for the President and other officials on issues of child rights.

• The juvenile justice structure has been reorganized and the range of physical punishments allowable for minors has been limited.

• Since July 1991, education has been mandatory for children from 6 to 16 years old, and legal action can be taken against parents who do not comply.

• Teachers have been retrained to encourage students to express their views freely. As a result of the new system, physical punishment in schools appears to be declining.

First Call for Children

'The essential needs of children should be given priority in bad times as well as good' — Plan of Action, World Summit for Children

Assessing progress for women and girls

UNICEF/Jon Spaull

Women in an Indian village support their married adolescent daughters in postponing cohabitation until they finish primary school. Men in Jamaica meet in father-support groups. And the boys in a Ghanaian school learn how to cook and clean, while the girls are offered classes in carpentry and engineering.

Innovations such as these are beginning to show up here and there around the world. At the same time, improvements in the numbers — in education, in birth rates, in female participation in the paid workforce — are beginning to show the effects of the past two decades of concentrated effort on behalf of girls and women. As the Fourth World Conference on Women opens in Beijing, some activists question how sustainable these successes are and how deep a change they symbolize. Nonetheless, there is guarded optimism about the future.

There are other signs of hope in the world. Morocco is triumphing over diarrhoea through a massive effort supported by its King, the Scouts and everyone in between. An initiative to certify carpets made without child labour is beginning to take root in India. And, with 176 countries having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in this issue we introduce a new page highlighting the many country-level efforts to implement its provisions.

July-September/1995/No. 3

unicef
United Nations Children's Fund

Women: Equality proves elusive

continued from page 1

Many more women's organizations have been formed, especially in the South, and their activities, initally focused on welfare, have increasingly shifted to support women's empowerment and development. Throughout the world, women are more visible — as handpump mechanics and doctors, on village councils and national parliaments, and especially in schools, as both teachers and students.

Concrete advances for women can be celebrated in many areas:

• *Literacy*: The percentage of women with no formal education has been reduced dramatically in most countries — by more than half in the past 25 years in 30 countries analysed in one study. Great strides have been made in girls' education, especially in the Middle East. There, the gross primary school enrolment ratio increased from 40 girls per 100 boys in 1960 to 89 girls per 100 boys in 1992.

• *Fertility and family planning*: In the past generation, the proportion of women using modern family planning methods has risen from 10 per cent to 50 per cent. Between 1960 and 1990, the average number of children born per woman fell globally from 6 to 3.8.

• *Paid employment*: The ratio of economically active women to men increased from 37 per cent in 1970 to 62 per cent in 1990.

• *Statistics on women*: Significant advances have been made in obtaining gender-disaggregated data on the situation of women. The UN Statistical Division has compiled and published (in *World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*) 39 key indicators on women in 172 countries. Major efforts are also under way at the national level.

Women are poorer

These measurable gains, though, receive little notice. Why? Because of a more significant reality: despite these advances, women as a group have become poorer and more marginalized.

Since the Nairobi conference that marked the end of the Decade for Women in 1985, says Misrak Elias, UNICEF Senior Adviser on Gender and Development, "More opportunities for women have opened up in education, in employment and, especially in the Scandinavian countries, in political decision-making. But because of structural adjustment programmes, poverty, emergencies, and internal and external displacement as a result of civil strife, women are carrying a larger burden."

At home, with more marriages dissolving and men leaving in greater numbers in search of employment, women are being forced to take on greater responsibilities in both parenting and providing for their children. They are spending more time in the workplace, but at the end of the day they are taking home less money, whether that workplace is an informal market stall in a village of the South or a low-paid, low-status job in a suburb of the North. This decline is so widespread and striking that a term has been coined to describe it: the feminization of poverty.

This result is not surprising to people who have believed all along that development actions were failing to address the root causes of gender inequality. The ideal of many in the women's movement was a fundamental transformation of social, economic and political structures, leading to a more just and equal world.

But instead, most development actions have aimed at piecemeal increases of women's participation in the traditional development process. Thus, traditional hierarchial structures, in which men have always dominated, have been maintained. As a result, women have not obtained their share of decision-making power, whether in society or in the home.

Lack of power

Dr. Jahan sees this lack of power as the main deterrrent to women's advancement. "If you look at, say, the last 20 years, you see steady progress in health and education," she says. "But if you look at women's representation in decision-making, that has remained steady at 10 per cent or less. If women were more represented in decision-making positions, the allocation of resources nationally and globally among various kinds of uses would have been different. Only when women have more power will you find different kinds of policies and resource allocations."

The view is growing that one way of bringing about such a fundamental change is to start with the young. Improving the situation of girls has been a major UNICEF goal since 1990, when its Executive Board called for priority action for girls. But some women's NGOs, especially in the North, argued in the past against putting girls on the women's agenda.

In 1993, at the time of the Human Rights conference in Vienna, recalls Ms. Elias, "Some NGOs said, 'You are pushing women's reproductive role too much. We are here for our own emancipation. Don't tie us to children'. Their concerns were understandable, but we said, 'We're not talking about motherhood. We're talking about equality for women and girls in all phases of life'."

The obstacles women face, Ms. Elias and others argued, start at or even before birth. Therefore, they said, women's and girls' rights must be advanced in tandem.

As a result of extensive networking with NGOs and governments from all over the world, there has been a turnaround since 1993. The success of those efforts is demonstrated by the inclusion of girls as one of 12 'Critical Areas of Concern' in the Draft Platform for Action at Beijing.

Cautious optimism

Facing a future in which the political and economic commitments to women are shakier than in the past, activists are cautiously optimistic. "I have to balance my optimism with my concern about the direction of the global economy, which is superseding governments, superseding the needs of the people," says Ms. Kelber of WEDO.

Dr. Jahan believes that, for perspective, it is important to look at parallel struggles, such as the fight for racial equality. "On one level, people still have prejudices," she says. "But the kinds of blatant things society could do before, you cannot do now, like own slaves." The same is true for women, she says. "The kinds of exploitation that were codified in law, that women were inferior and had no rights in law, at least those things are no longer true."

Dr. Jahan, a Bangladeshi who holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University, also has the personal perspective of her own family. "In my grandmother's generation, in my family, no one went to school. Everybody's marriage was arranged by age 11 or 12. Certainly we have made progress!"

Catharine Way is Editor of **First Call for Children.**

The economic embargo in the wake of the Gulf War has forced many Iraqi girls to drop out of school.

Keeping Iraq's girls in school

By Lima Nabil

Twelve-year-old Nadia puts her heart and soul into the song she and her classmates are singing: "Learning lights up your world," goes the refrain, "and ignorance hinders your progress."

Nadia has a reason for being especially moved by the song: unlike her classmates, for whom school attendance has been an ordinary daily activity since the age of five, going to school is a special event for her. Although she began school as a young girl, poverty forced her to drop out. She spends part of each day selling cigarettes from a stall on a street corner. At the end of the day she takes home a little money that helps support her family.

Despite their struggle, her family made the far-sighted decision that learning would be more beneficial than ignorance. Nadia, too, responded enthusiastically to television spots calling on girls who had dropped out of school to join 'irregular' classes that would prepare them to rejoin regular classes. Nadia now goes to school as a regular pupil in the morning and spends the afternoon at her stall.

Economic embargo

The economic embargo against Iraq, in place since the Persian Gulf war in 1991, has hit everyone hard. The average monthly salary of a senior government official is now 5,000 Iraqi dinars, or less than US$4. For the poor, fulfilling the most minimal daily needs is almost impossible. But, sounding mature far beyond her years, Nadia says, "When this dark cloud that shrouds our dreams goes, learning will be the saviour that leads us out of this dark tunnel."

Before the war, Iraq could boast of almost universal literacy among its 19 million people. But over the past two years, the drop-out rate among girls 10 to 12 years old has spiralled as the economic difficulties have forced them to join the labour market. Some girls are their families' primary breadwinners.

To prevent these girls from falling into a downward spiral, the Ministry of Eduation has launched a pioneering programme to help them, in cooperation with the General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW) and UNICEF. The programme's 450 special schools offer classes in reading, arithmetic and sewing, in addition to the everyday 'life' skills offered in regular schools.

The number of graduates in the programme rose from 7,000 girls in 1992 to 14,000 by early 1995. The classes are offered free of charge and take place in school buildings after regular school hours. A total of 17,000 girls aged 10 to 14 years old who had dropped out of school will have benefited from the programme by the end of this scholastic year, according to Fadilah Abbas, information official of the GFIW.

"The philosophy of this project is to break the yoke of illiteracy among young girls and open for them the door of knowledge, closed by the difficult circumstances," she says. The project also aims to bridge the enrolment gap between boys and girls.

Lima Nabil, based in Amman, Jordan, is a writer specializing in women, children and development issues.

South Africa promises gender equality in high-level appointments

By Colleen Lowe Morna

Until gender balance is achieved, all appointments of ministers and deputy ministers in South Africa will be women, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki announced in early July.

He also pledged that the South African Government would make every effort to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by 9 August, South African Women's Day. The Convention was signed by the former white majority government in 1993.

The announcements came at a preparatory workshop for the Fourth World Conference on Women. Natalie Africa, Project Coordinator of the National NGO Secretariat for the Beijing conference, said Mr. Mbeki's participation was "the first time that someone at that level of decision-making has sat down to interact with women."

Although women are one quarter of South Africa's National Assembly, the country has only two female ministers and three deputy ministers.

Mr. Mbeki also announced that:

• An Office on the Status of Women (OSW) will soon be established in the President's Office. It "will be a mechanism for implementation, not theory or philosophy," Mr. Mbeki said.

• The Commission for Gender Equality will be established as soon as possible. This Commission is provided for in the Interim Constitution but has not yet been formed because of a long debate over its composition and functions. Draft legislation to be put before Parliament shortly proposes that the Commission be an independent body with a watchdog function.

Until recently, under both customary and the Roman Dutch law that prevails in South Africa, women were regarded as minors all their lives, subject to the authority of their fathers and husbands, or, after the death of those men, their sons or other male relatives.

Colleen Lowe Morna is a reporter with Women's Feature Service.

The invisible girl, her visible burden

By Sara Ann Friedman

> *"Why should I send my daughter to school? Who then is going to look after the babies, fetch water, clean and cook when I go to market to sell my vegetables? Who is going to help me dig, weed and harvest?"*
>
> *— A Nigerian mother*

As the visibility of women increases, as women worldwide demand their rights and win their rightful place in society as decision makers and productive wage-earners, they must not leave their daughters behind. For the burden women drop does not disappear into thin air — it is likely to fall on the backs of the girls who follow them.

What happens to girls as women advance is a concern expressed by a growing number of NGOs as they prepare for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The vast majority of girls, whatever else they may be doing, are working 4 to 16 hours daily at home, invisible and isolated, without pay and without recognition. The plight of girls who are denied access to education and denied their right to development often replicates that of their mothers — trapped in low-pay, low-status, exploitative jobs.

Illustrations by Regina Faul David

The necessity and educational benefits of the work that girls do at home or in the fields is not in question. The survival of the family as an economic and social unit is essential to the well-being of all children, and their participation in that survival can enhance their development. The problem is the long hours and hard work demanded of girls, which often make them the primary support of their families.

Official censuses depict girls as working far less than boys. Data are scarce and based on small samples, but many countries' statistics show that 40 per cent of girls work; the figure can dip as low as 18 per cent. But these data are no cause for celebration, according to a report from the International Labour Organisation, for they count only paid work in the formal sector. If girls' unremunerated chores were counted as work, that percentage might double or even triple, the report suggests.

Probably all of the 70 million girls estimated to be out of school are working, the majority at home. Many also do additional work to earn money. No serious effort to educate girls can go forward without addressing what they do when they are not in school.

Gender-disaggregated data on household work are sparse, scattered and localized, but cumulatively consistent. Most studies show that girls begin to work in the house at a younger age than their brothers and work seven hours more per week.

A girl is expected to contribute to the maintenance of the family by assisting — and in many cases replacing — her mother in a dozen draining domestic chores each day: washing clothes, cleaning house, fetching water and firewood, cooking, child care. A study by ACTIONAID Uganda shows that gender divisions of labour begin as early as age four, when girls are expected to carry their younger siblings, grind millet, wash clothes and walk for miles to fetch water. Meanwhile, boys play and 'learn to be men'. Other studies show very few activities done by both girls and boys: of the 13 household chores performed by girls, only two — chopping and collecting wood — are also performed by boys.

Myth vs. reality

Many NGOs working in rural areas have pointed out the widespread myth about family-based agricultural work: that it is performed primarily by boys and that it is not exploitative labour. On the contrary, they say, up to 75 per cent of this work is done by women and girls. Where there are no machines, noted an NGO from Bangladesh, every inch of land is cultivated by the hands of girls and women. Girls help their mothers prepare the land; seed, weed, thresh and cut crops; and prepare them for storage. They clean the compound and assist in all stages of food processing.

Men plough and fertilize; boys help primarily during seasonal peaks by bringing the cattle to the fields and the crops to market. Boys participate in fetching wood and water only when aided by appropriate technology, such as a wheelbarrow or other vehicle. One report says that for boys to carry water on their heads would be demeaning.

There is a close link between poverty and the devaluation of girls. Because many girls marry and leave their families when they are still children, parents often do not consider educating them to be worth the investment. But this pattern flies in the face of the reality that girls provide enormous economic value to their families.

Says Lesley Roberts, Director of Anti-Slavery International, "Sometimes we can't avoid facing the fact that mothers themselves, and of course mothers-in-law, perpetuate the vicious cycle of low self-esteem and low status in which they are caught." But there is a paradox, adds Ms. Roberts. For while many women dread having daughters, and go on bearing children until they have a son, it is the female offspring, whether daughter or daughter-in-law, whom the family depends on as the mainstay of survival.

Experience also exposes the myth that domestic work is not work: because domestic chores are not paid and do not lead to skilled wage labour, they are not measured or counted in national statistics and thus have no official economic worth. In truth, this work has enormous value. According to a Kenyan researcher, Sheila Parvyn Wamahiu, it frees a mother and often a father to work for wages and it pays for a boy's education.

Because girls do more work, the family loses more if they send a daughter to school than if they send a son. In the growing home-based piece-work and wage-work industries — embroidery and sewing, gem polishing, toy- and carpet-making — the National Council of Education Research and Training in New Delhi reports that while women are paid to do this work, girls often are not. For them, it is often full-time (thus precluding the opportunity to go to school), hazardous and uncompensated. According to a 1995 World Bank background paper on child labour, "When mothers go to work in the market, girls stay home; in this way, the opportunity cost of school is not a girl's forgone wages, but her mother's."

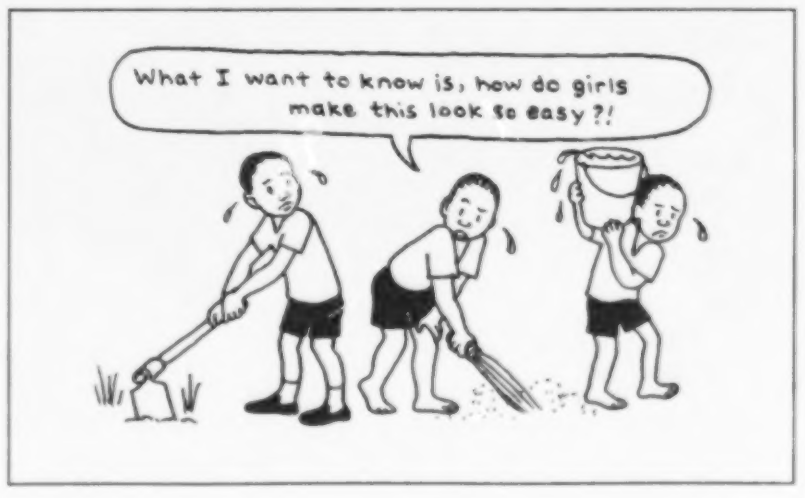
It is clear enough that while the work itself has high value, the girl who performs the work has no value. In fact, the continued monetary worth of her burdensome and unremunerated domestic labour depends on a girl remaining invisible, her work remaining unacknowledged and unrecognized.

Perils of child marriage

The connection between harsh domestic labour and child marriage has become increasingly clear to development workers. Maintaining child marriage can be an effective way of ensuring control over a girl's productive and reproductive labour, according to Anti-Slavery International studies. An ACTIONAID report from Nepal found that no matter what the caste or ethnic group, a daughter-in-law was viewed as having the heaviest burden in the household. "Some even admitted that the only reason for marriage was to cover the work burden," the report says.

Child marriage is the most exploitative form of domestic labour and the central cause of the continued low status of girls and women, according to Jamuna Paruchuru, founder of an NGO, ASMITA, that works in advocacy and training with women and girls in rural southern India. In 1993, ASMITA established a village school for 11- to 14-year-old married girls who, with their mothers' support, agreed to postpone cohabitation until they had completed their primary education. (They were also the first females in this area to go to school.) The school was subjected

continued on page 10



Getting girls on the Beijing agenda

By Mary Purcell

Girls of today are women of tomorrow ... now is the time to accord the girl child her full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms including the rights assured by universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Yet, there exists worldwide evidence of discrimination and violence against girls that begin even before they are born and continue unabated through their lives. They often have less access to nutrition, physical and mental health and education, enjoy fewer rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence than boys. They are often subject to sexual and economic exploitation, violence and harmful practices such as prenatal sex selection, infanticide, female genital mutilation and early marriage.

— Excerpt from the Global Framework, Draft Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women

Broad social movements rarely begin at a single moment. What we remember is the event or incident around which they coalesced for us.

The international movement for girls, or the 'girl child', began for different people at different times and places. The event around which it has coalesced is the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. At the Third Preparatory Committee (or PrepCom) meeting in March 1995 in New York, girls became a major item on the agenda. They were integrated into every relevant section of the Beijing Draft Platform for Action and claimed a separate paragraph in Chapter II, the Global Framework. Their concerns won designation of a 'Critical Area of Concern', one of 12 deemed serious enough to deserve special attention, addressing the far-reaching interrelated obstacles to development girls face from birth to womanhood. These results were a historic breakthrough, given that girls had been almost entirely overlooked in the three previous United Nations women's conferences.

For many NGOs from the North, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna was our consciousness-raising moment and mobilizing event. We were impressed by, and many of us had participated in, the two-year organizing effort of women's groups that turned women into major actors at the Conference and won the historic declaration that "women's rights are human rights."

But we were also taken aback by the negative response to a proposal that a 'life-cycle' approach to human rights for women be considered, that girls — who are, after all, tomorrow's women — take their rightful place on the world agenda. We were disturbed by a vociferous group of mostly Northern women who chanted: "No children! No children!"

Intellectually, we understood, of course, their single-minded demand that there be no distraction from or loosening of this fragile hold on a new and hard-won victory. We also understood the dangers implicit in asking women who had struggled for so long to identify themselves as 'other than mothers' to once again be seen with children on their backs.

Nevertheless, we disagreed: the link between women and girls goes beyond parent and child. All women are born girls; they **become** women. Discrimination and denial of rights begin not at 18, but at birth, sometimes earlier. And the impact lasts a lifetime. As a girl grows into womanhood she views herself in society's mirror — without worth or identity.

For the countries of South Asia, the powerful and penetrating obstacles to development that face a girl child had long been a focus of concern. The Jomtien (Thailand) World Conference on Education for All paid full attention to the issue of discrimination against girls and gave a boost to the nascent movement for them. SAARC (the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) declared 1990 the Year of the Girl Child, the 1990s her decade.

Laying the groundwork

For activists in Africa, too, there had long been wide awareness of the economic, social and cultural problems facing girls. In 1989 and 1990, the newly adopted Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration of Action for the World Summit for Children gave a public face to the issue of girls' rights. At the Dakar Regional PrepCom for Beijing in November 1994, a coordinated effort among NGOs and delegations resulted in the inclusion of a separate section for the girl child in the final declaration. Thus, the groundwork was laid for what was to come.

How, then, could we best advance the cause of girls — both as women-in-progress and as human beings with rights of their own?

In Geneva and New York, two Working Groups on Girls were simultaneously and independently established, collectively representing more than 50 international NGOs. Our immediate focus was Beijing — 'only' two years away. As NGOs we had learned the importance of early action, knowing that UN conference platforms of action are all finalized (except for brackets) before the conference even begins. With this in mind, we began organizing early, lobbying and building coalitions with Northern women's groups and NGOs from other regions.

At PrepCom III in New York, a Girls' Caucus met almost daily to analyse, strategize, organize and compromise — and to monitor Platform progress. Composed of a core working group of 10 and attended by more than 100 NGOs and leading delegates from all regions, the caucus provided a forum for the daily dialogue, rapid decision-making, flexibility and evolving solidarity required to make a real impact.

We were not encouraged by our first sight of the Draft Platform for Action. Despite 18 months of work, girls were mentioned only 26 times, almost all in the Education section and a few scattered places where "... and girls" had been added.

A new Critical Area of Concern

When the African NGOs indicated their determination to propose, on the floor, a completely new Critical Area of Concern for girls, the Caucus had serious doubts about its likelihood of success. We agreed to support the effort while continuing to lobby for specific language that integrated girls throughout the document — in sections on Health and Violence, for example, in addition to Education. We sensed an overall lack of enthusiasm and heard misgivings expressed by delegates from other regions. People were concerned that a separate section on girls would either marginalize them or open the door to other 'special interests'.

But the Africans persisted. The next thing we knew, the Group of 77 had proposed a new Critical Area of Concern and the European Union, which had opposed it, now wanted to strengthen it. Caucus support grew daily as members waited outside the closed doors of government drafting sessions, trailed delegates through the halls and tracked the minutiae of the evolving Platform, noting each new mention of girls.

Each day, as rumours flew as to whether the new Critical Area of Concern was 'in' or 'out', delegates hammered out language and built consensus. A full eight-page section devoted to girls was approved at the final plenary in the final minutes of the last day.

Almost two years of organizing and consensus-building culminated in one challenge met. But the struggle is far from over. At Beijing itself, there is still much lobbying to do, many brackets in the documents to be faced, important issues such as girls' labour that are still un- or under-addressed.

But more importantly, this Conference itself is a beginning, not an end. The closer we look at the issues, the more evident their complexity and inescapable linkages become — education linked to violence, and to child marriage, health, nutrition, sexual exploitation, and all of these to economic and social disparities and inequities. There are no quick fixes or sectoral solutions. In the end, what happens beyond Beijing is what really matters.

Mary Purcell is Co-Chair of the NGO Committee on UNICEF Working Group on Girls in New York.

UNICEF/Mike Goodwin

Ensuring that girls worldwide have access to education is one goal of the NGOs attending the Beijing conference.

Girls Inc.

In 'Will Power/Won't Power', an adolescent pregnancy prevention project sponsored by Girls Incorporated in New York City, teens learn assertiveness through role-playing activities.

Good news/bad news on teen motherhood in the United States

By Samme Chittum

It was after 7 o'clock on a warm April evening and Ruth Mele Tiche was still at work in her never-ending job as Director of Bethany House, a live-in residence for 11 single teenage mothers and their babies. She had stayed late to care for one of the residents who had had an asthma attack. Playing the role of mother to these young mothers is all in a day's work for the Director of this unusual programme, operating for 10 years in New York City.

Bethany House helps these adolescent mothers become both responsible parents and self-supporting adults. The programme provides parenting classes, tutoring, counselling and child care while the young mothers work or attend school. By the time they leave Bethany House, they are well on their way to building a stable life for themselves and their children.

This supportive and nurturing approach reflects, on the one hand, a big step forward from the United States of 30 years ago. Then, unwed pregnant teens were often abruptly sent off to distant relatives or cloistered institutions to give birth in secret — and then to give up their babies for adoption. The possibilities of staying in school as the pregnancy began to 'show' or keeping the baby weren't realistic options for most. Today, pregnant teenagers have a right to remain in school. Child care and flexible schedules are sometimes provided to allow teenagers to both study and parent. Some teenage mothers have become class presidents.

At the same time, as economic polarities sharpen and sexual activity among teenagers increases, there is another, less hopeful, reality facing pregnant teens today. The number of teen pregnancies has increased dramatically in the US in the past three decades and continues to rise, putting both mother and child at risk. Nine per cent (about 360,000) of all babies born in 1990 were born to single teen mothers, according to the American Humane Association. The figure represents an increase of 16 per cent from 1985.

Programmes like Bethany House are far more the exception than the rule. Most single young mothers, their education disrupted, slip into poverty and despair — and have more children. Women on welfare who began childbearing as teenagers are more likely to have large families than women who waited until they were 20, according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, which analyses reproductive health data.

For the numerous NGOs that have worked for years to help girls, teen pregnancy is a familiar and often frustrating problem. It has been made more difficult by a social climate that favours punitive cost-saving measures over services to pregnant teens. Governments at the local, state and national level are cutting back on social programmes, including those for teenage mothers, and using government aid cut-offs to punish girls who become pregnant. The US Congress is considering a variety of measures that would deny benefits to babies born to mothers on welfare and to families of unwed teenage mothers.

Budget cuts

Bethany House, like many social services, is feeling the impact of this drive to reduce funding for services. It faces a 30 per cent (US$220,000) cut in its budget, which is largely funded by New York City. Like many other service providers, Ms. Mele Tiche is saddened by the new direction of welfare reform. Wholeheartedly supporting the need for prevention, she sees little connection between punishment and deterrence.

More effective in helping prevent teenage pregnancy is access to information and contraceptives, according to the NGO Advocates for Youth, based in Washington, D.C. Many school boards in US cities have battled over whether to allow public schools to provide sex education and condoms. Across the country, some religious and other groups are fighting to stop local funding for Planned Parenthood centres in their communities.

To help NGOs push both locally and nationally for better reproductive health information and health care for teenage girls, Advocates for Youth publishes a quarterly newsletter and disseminates fact sheets, information packets, tips on organizing and a manual on how to develop condom-availability programmes.

Most teenagers are listening

Despite continued resistance from groups opposed to providing birth control information, reports show that teenagers are listening, says Advocates for Youth Director Margaret Pruitt. Most teenagers can and do use contraception. Nearly 60 per cent of poor and low-income teenagers and about 75 per cent of higher-income adolescent girls use some method of contraception — usually the condom — the first time they have sex, she says. Even more use birth control regularly. She also points out that women over 20, not teenagers, represent the sharpest increase in unintended pregnancies — a full 75 per cent of them, according to the Guttmacher Institute. And, despite the furore over adolescent irresponsibility, only 5 per cent of mothers receiving welfare are teenagers: only 1 per cent are under 18.

For many NGOs, the proverbial ounce of prevention is standard practice. Preventive programmes are not only more economical, they also spare vulnerable adolescents the distressful choice between abortion and early motherhood. For 50 years, Girls Inc. (formerly Girls Clubs of America) has taken the long view, working to prevent unwanted pregnancy by empowering girls to take charge of their own lives. Serving 350,000 girls throughout the US, the NGO has a teen pregnancy prevention programme for girls from 8 to 18 years old.

In its first phase, the programme focuses on communication of values between parents and children. Girls 11 to 14 learn about 'Will Power/Won't Power', which helps them learn to say "no" and involves role-playing and skills building. The section for girls ages 15 to 18 concentrates on "taking care of business," says

continued on page 10

Protecting girls advances women: Fighting female infanticide

Saving the lives of girl babies and enhancing the status of women are inseparable, according to many NGOs. An example of this link is the problem of female infanticide and neglect in South Asia. Of the 15 million girls born in India annually, about 5 million die by age 15, a third of those in the first year of life, according to UNICEF.

Sex-selective abortion as well as female infanticide and neglect (such as shorter periods of breastfeeding and less medical care) are believed to have contributed significantly to the steady decline of the female sex ratio in India, from 972 females to 1,000 males in 1901 to 925 per 1,000 in 1991. Despite laws prohibiting female infanticide, the practice is still widespread in several states, especially the rural areas of Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and the Chambal Valley in Madhya Pradesh.

Deeply rooted in poverty and social and cultural attitudes that favour boys, this practice is a crucial indicator of the low status of women, says Anita (her only name), Director of the Rajasthan Adult Education Association (RAEA). She describes posters that advertise prenatal sex-determination tests using the slogan: "Spend 5,000 rupees; save 10 lakhs (a million rupees, about US$32,000)."

"With the glaring evil of a dowry staring her family in the face, the girl becomes a financial liability and is treated as a *parayadin* (somebody else's property), a commodity to be sold at an early age," says Anita. For many families, female infanticide is a way to shake off this liability.

"Most horrifically," according to a publication from the Indian Council on Child Welfare (ICCW), an NGO in Tamil Nadu, "many women themselves see no reason to pass on their own legacy of suffering and low worth to their daughters." The killing of the baby girl, often carried out by family members, becomes culturally and personally justifiable.

RAEA works in 14 districts of Rajasthan, where its advocacy and education activities challenge the myth of *parayadin* by demonstrating a girl's real value to her family. The group also organizes school enrolment drives and educates communities about the biological origins of gender: in the male chromosome.

"On a most basic level," says Anita, "we also tell the village elders that if they kill all the girls, there will be none left to marry and boys will have to share their wives."

More than 1,000 girls saved

Since 1988, ICCW has been working in 288 villages in Tamil Nadu, where it has helped save more than 1,000 girl babies from certain death. The group has succeeded in stopping the practice entirely in 23 villages. Workers from ICCW visit every village and identify pregnant women. They meet with the mother and other family members to discuss why they should not kill the girl baby. Special counselling is given to 'high-risk' mothers with more than one daughter.

Women's groups formed by the Council, called *Mhalir Mandrams*, monitor progress and use street theatre, folk arts and other media to raise community awareness. ICCW has encouraged families to enrol their daughters in school and provides child-care centres, vocational training and development camps for adolescent girls and awareness programmes in the villages and schools for both boys and girls. These programmes address dowry, marriage customs and atrocities against women.

The NGO has also organized supervised home-study centres to give girls the time, place and support to study. ICCW also arranges loans for small business ventures, which the NGO believes will transform women and girls into obvious assets for their families and society.

UNICEF/HQ91-1001/Shoeb-ur-Zaman

Empowering girls enhances the status of women.

Sex-worker educators check HIV spread

An AIDS control programme using peer educators has checked the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and given self-respect to the exploited women in a sprawling brothel in Calcutta.

In three years, the effort by India's National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) has slashed sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) by more than a fifth, frozen HIV infection levels and dramatically increased the use of condoms in Sonagachi, the largest and oldest commercial sex quarter in Calcutta.

More and more women from the brothel are coming forward to be trained as AIDS instructors. The first lot of 12 green-aproned educators drawn from practising or former sex workers has been joined by an additional 50 women. NACO and WHO have extended the scheme to nine other districts of Calcutta and the adjoining township of Howrah.

For the past two years, sex workers from Sonagachi have been taking part in the prestigious annual Calcutta book fair, where they set up stalls to distribute AIDS educational material and talk to visitors.

"Of course it was not easy to start this programme," says project manager Smarajit Jana. "The sex workers had to be convinced that the programme would not speak against prostitution and not upset their profession directly or indirectly." It was clearly established that the programme was not aimed at the sex workers' rehabilitation.

In addition, the support of powerful brothel interests had to be won, according to Smarajit Jana, who is also a senior teacher of epidemiology in the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health. The Institute is running the scheme for NACO and WHO in collaboration with three NGOs, one of them a group of sex workers.

Lack of AIDS knowledge

A door-to-door survey by NACO, conducted prior to the start of the project, also found that less than a third of the Sonagachi sex workers had heard of AIDS and only 69 per cent knew about sexually transmitted diseases. More than 8 out of 10 women had a sexually transmitted ailment. About 1 in 100 women had the HIV virus.

Sexually spread diseases have now declined by a quarter from earlier levels, and the HIV infection rate is almost static in Sonagachi. Most women now know what AIDS is, how it spreads and how to avoid it. Three years ago almost none of the sex workers used condoms; now almost half of them do.

From an IPS report.

The invisible burden of girls

continued from page 7

to vociferous harassment by the girls' mothers-in-law and was raided by local landlords, who accused ASMITA of running a brothel.

When they were asked directly, Ms. Paruchuru says, "They told us, 'If these girls go to school, we will have to hire adults and pay adult wages'." Only with the acknowledgement of the true economic and social value of domestic work, she says, can early marriage be eliminated, the burden of household labour be equalized and a girl's right to development be assured. When the worth of this work is recognized, girls will be more valued and boys will do more work.

Taking action

Awareness is the first step to action. Many NGOs are already addressing this widespread problem with innovative school-based programmes that link education and girls' household work.

In Ghana in 1992, schools began teaching cooking and cleaning to boys, while at the same time encouraging girls to study carpentry, engineering and sciences. Supported by the Forum for African Women Educationalists, the Mother's Association formed in one province of Burkina Faso reduced the domestic responsibilities of their girls by developing and making use of labour-saving technologies. They also found ways to earn extra income, which enabled them to pay for their daughters' schooling. The Village School of Mali, a non-formal education project, holds classes three hours a day to accommodate girls' household responsibilities.

In Nairobi, the Kenya Alliance of Advocacy for Children learned that the poor performance of girls in school was rooted in gender-based household inequities. Attempting to reverse the pattern, a programme operating in four schools provides time each afternoon for girls to study — while boys clean the school and cut the grass. It was difficult to overcome resistance to this simple-sounding solution, acknowledges Joyce Umbima, Director of the NGO. Teachers argued that the girls clean much better. The boys don't like the arrangement, but they are doing the work — and starting to understand just how heavy a burden their sisters carry and how they can help them.

These efforts are a critical beginning. But NGOs agree that large-scale, concerted and coordinated action is needed at the national and international levels by governments and the private sector to collect accurate, global, gender-disaggregated data, to draw from and replicate successful local programmes, to develop and implement policies and programmes that support families. There is no better place than the Fourth World Conference on Women for the women of today to pass on to the women of tomorrow the mantle of their vast networks and their hard-won collective power, experience and wisdom.

Sara Ann Friedman is Editor of **NGO Action for Children.**

NGO Action for Children

Editor: Sara Ann Friedman
Working Group: Gordon Kopf (OMEP), chair; Yvonne Asamoah (IASSW); Charlotte Brody (ACEI); Rita Cooper (OMEP); Amelia Dozzi (SO); Kate Katzki (ICSW); Miriam Lyons, (AFXB); Paul McCleary (CCF); Roberta Ross (ICJW).

NGO Action for Children is produced by the NGO Committee on UNICEF. The opinions expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect those of UNICEF.

NEWS BRIEFS

Women fight wars with peace

In battle-scarred Bosnia, women opened 'emergency schools' so youngsters could go on learning, live some semblance of normal life and avoid being overwhelmed by the violence around them.

In Latin America, mourning mothers of the 'disappeared' demanded action from dictators in the 1970s, and women in El Salvador helped broker peace talks three years ago.

In Sri Lanka, the mother of a slain journalist has set up a group called Mothers Front to trace thousands of disappeared husbands, brothers and sons and to help bereaved women.

Sudanese women are using traditional African ways of resolving conflicts, which prefer conciliation over a 'winner takes all' mentality.

These are some ways in which women are helping build a culture of peace to replace the world's mindset of conflict and aggression with one of negotiation and reason.

But building such a culture is far from easy in a world of conflicts, many of them sparked by ethnic and social tensions after the cold war's end.

A group of peace activists meeting in Manila recently said women could contribute much more to domestic and international peace if communities around the world heeded their unique viewpoints and approaches to conflict resolution. "Women have a specific role in transforming a culture of violence into a culture of peace," they said in a report issued after an experts' meeting on the Women's Role in a Culture of Peace. The four-day meeting was convened by UNESCO in the run-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995, and as part of its Culture for Peace Programme.

From an IPS report.

India to develop uniform civil code

In a landmark judgement in May, India's Supreme Court directed the Government to develop a uniform civil code for the country. The court was acting on petitions by four Hindu women whose husbands had converted to Islam simply to marry second wives. The court also held invalid conversion to Islam for the specific purpose of using Muslim law for remarriage.

The Supreme Court judgement asked the Government to frame comprehensive legislation "in keeping with the modern-day concept of human rights for women." Each community in India — Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees — is governed by its own personal laws.

A number of laws exist to protect the rights of women in India, but an equal number of loopholes and varied interpretation of laws provide enough grounds for the abuse of women's rights. For instance, there is no law on domestic violence. Only violence provoked by the demand for more dowry is punishable under law.

The Hindu Marriage Act allows divorce by mutual consent, but Muslim and Christian women are denied this right. Since 1986, Muslim women have been allowed to file for divorce under the Muslim Women Dissolution of Marriage Act, which offers limited grounds for divorce.

But Christian women, covered by a 19th century law, have to prove adultery and must have their petitions approved by a high court. A lower district court decree is sufficient for all other women.

From an IPS report.

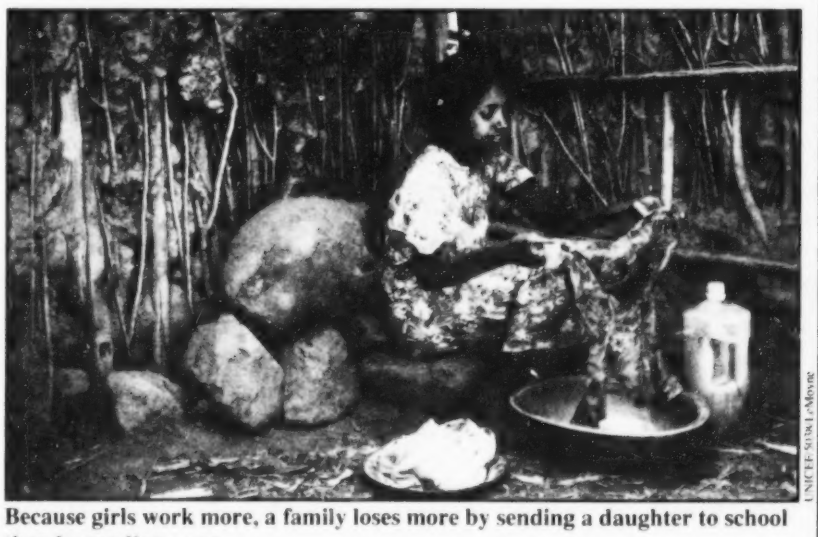
Teen motherhood

continued from page 9

spokesperson Amy Plotch. Teens begin career and life planning and consider decisions about whether and when a baby fits into their future.

In a self-evaluation that looked at its graduates over a three-year period in regions with high teen-pregnancy rates, the NGO found that younger girls who completed the programme were half as likely to have sex and the older graduates were half as likely to become pregnant while still adolescents. Ms. Plotch says, "Empowering girls to take charge of their lives works. Punishment doesn't."

Samme Chittum is a US-based journalist and editor at Women's Feature Service.



UNICEF-5034/Lemoyne

Because girls work more, a family loses more by sending a daughter to school than by sending a son.

UNICEF-DOMS-1220-Andrew

Young women who are empowered and self-confident are better able to deal with societal pressures.

'Meena' goes to Africa

By Julia Spry-Leverton

Meena, the animated 'girl' created to improve the situation of real girls in South Asia, may soon have a counterpart in East Africa.

A team of 34 researchers, writers and artists from 10 countries met in May to bring the new girl (as yet unnamed) to life. They spent a week synthesizing the results of 395 focus group meetings with girls and boys, men and women from ethnically diverse areas of East Africa. Their efforts were aimed at refining the cast of characters and initial episodes for an animated cartoon, comic book and radio series for distribution throughout the region. It was the third workshop of the project, which began a year ago.

In South Asia, Meena is the heroine of an animated cartoon and radio series focusing on issues confronting a girl of primary school age, such as the importance of attending school and of more fair distribution of chores and food.

In East Africa, she will probably be a little older, about 13 to 15 years, reflecting the increasing pressures that confront African girls in this age group. Although she is being developed specifically for East Africa, West Africa was represented at the workshop, and a participant from that region said the character will be easily adaptable.

An 'empowered' heroine

The primary task of the workshop — the 'Adolescent Girl Communication Initiative', held in Machakos (Kenya) — was to create an 'empowered' heroine. She should be assertive but not disrespectful, and bright but not dauntingly brilliant, the group members agreed. They worked to fit her into a family and home setting. Story-lines discussed included staying in school and career aspirations, sexual abuse and AIDS prevention, and female genital mutilation. The team hopes to launch this role model for girls to the public in 1996.

But first she must have a name. It is no easy task to single out one acceptable to countries all across Africa. A short list had been researched in focus groups of citizens in urban and rural settings, and 'Sara' emerged as a widely acceptable favourite. However, workshop participants expressed such dissatisfaction with Sara — it is not typically African and it has biblical overtones — that the name remains as yet undecided, the subject of further research.

In addition to creating a role model for girls, the initiative will provide a permanent pool of trained researchers in the region. More than 100 people have participated, acquiring the base of knowledge necessary to perform research using focus groups on any subject. But Mira Aghi, who has directed the research for both South Asia and East Africa, cautioned that research should be used as a springboard. "Research should be the servant of creativity, not the master dictating how things must be," she said.

Similarities outweigh differences

At the workshop, participants from the 10 countries (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) reported focus-group reactions to the first drafts of the scripts. Overall, the participants repeatedly mentioned, the similarities shared by the countries outweighed the differences, but this was perhaps small consolation for the writers who had to rework their drafts and decide which changes to incorporate and which to ignore.

Comments about the credibility of the stories as presented were often sharp, to the point that the participants debated whether the fantasy element of story-telling conventions could have any place in this initiative. Writer Richard Mabala, from Tanzania, at one point expressed the worry that "all the best bits will end up being left out and the end result will lack all spontaneity."

But one story, re-crafted and read aloud for the third time, elicited applause and cries of "More, more!" proving that the participatory process can provide satisfactory results — so long as the writer does not lose heart.

"This story is really ours," said a Ugandan researcher as she recognized elements from earlier drafts, "and they will think that in the village, too, when we go and read it to them."

On these village visits, researchers will take the revised sketches of the heroine, her family, friends and neighbourhood. "Put in some green flat areas, plenty of brown, some hills — do we need a river?" was the briefing given to the artists preparing backdrops for the stories. The landscape that evolved, intended to portray the region's extremes of aridity and lushness, was on a suitably grand African scale, dotted with graceful acacia trees. Housing, it was decided,

continued on page 12

The growing movement against FGM in France

For decades, many girls of African ancestry living in France have been subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM), a painful excision of some or all of the female genitals. But several practitioners of FGM have recently been sentenced to serve time in prison as French courts crack down on the procedure.

At the same time, girls and their families are beginning to clamour for change, thanks to the efforts of La Commission pour l'Abolition des Muti'ations Sexuelles, or Commission for the Abolition of Sexual Mutilation (CAMS), an international NGO founded by Awa Thiam, a Senegalese woman.

Defending young victims

"The young girls now — they rebel," says Linda Weil-Curiel, a French lawyer with CAMS who volunteers to defend young victims, some of them infants, in court. After hearing about an upcoming case, Ms. Weil-Curiel shows up in court as a 'civil party' to the suit to argue the side of the young victim who would otherwise have no advocate.

"I do not ask for prison for parents," says Ms. Weil-Curiel, who believes that children of African descent should be given legal protection equal to that of other French children. "But I ask for clear punishment to make the issue understood."

Partly as a result of her efforts, the courts have been taking an increasingly stronger stance on mutilation of children, which is outlawed by the French penal code. French law protects all children on French soil, regardless of national origin, as well as French-born Africans who return to their countries.

In September 1994, the criminal court sentenced 48-year-old Hawa Gréou, from Mali, to a year in jail for performing FGM on two babies. Ms. Gréou's sentence was eventually suspended. But now, she is due back in court to defend herself in another FGM trial.

This time, says Ms. Weil-Curiel, her accusor is a 20-year-old woman denouncing the FGM practitioner for mutilating herself and her four sisters when they were children. The case, the first to be brought to court by a former victim, is the latest in a spate of 20 FGM trials in France's highest criminal court.

Prison sentence

In 1991, a judge gave the first prison sentence to a woman who had performed FGM. Hospital staff reported the woman, Sakho Keita, to the police after a baby she had excised haemorrhaged to death in the hospital, according to official records. Two years later, another judge delivered the first prison sentence ever to the mother of an excised girl, meting out five years in prison, with four suspended.

"The sentence was a big shock to African communities," says Ms. Weil-Curiel, who sees court cases as the best way to raise public awareness of FGM.

Not every trial ends in prosecution, however. Judges and lawyers are hesitant to prosecute people for practising a centuries-old tradition, especially when the defendants believe it is for their children's benefit. As a result, says Ms. Weil-Curiel, who spoke recently at UNICEF House in New York, "most sentences are suspended — judges are lenient."

Female genital mutilation generally involves cutting away part or all of the clitoris and labia, but in some cases the remaining flesh is also sewn together, leaving only small holes for bodily functions. Girls as young as three weeks undergo the procedure, often performed by an excisor who uses crude, unsterile instruments such as razor blades or scissors. The victims endure physical consequences that include haemorrhage, infection and, later, difficult and dangerous pregnancy and childbirth. Many also suffer emotional trauma.

Two million victims yearly

FGM is widespread among various ethnic groups, and up to 114 million girls and women living today have been subjected to it. More than 2 million girls are believed to undergo FGM each year in more than 25 African countries and a few countries in Asia and the Middle East.

Though several governments have passed laws prohibiting FGM, the practice often continues illegally. It poses a particular problem among expatriate communities, where it can easily remain hidden from authorities.

Many communities ignore the law because they consider the practice a cultural right deserving protection from outside interference. Often, these communities invoke their religion to condone the practice, despite the fact that neither the Koran nor the Bible calls for such mutilation.

Several practitioners of FGM have been sentenced to prison, and families are beginning to clamour for a stop to the practice.

Changing cultural practices and perceptions is difficult, and Ms. Weil-Curiel admits that for a while she was "public enemy number one" among African women. But gradually, as the trials' publicity and the work of CAMS spread, hardline positions softened and FGM became a subject of debate among affected communities. As a result, she says, "many, many families have stopped the procedure."

To inform the growing debate, CAMS in 1994 produced a 15-minute film, *Le Pari de Bintou* (Bintou's Bet), dramatizing the struggle of a Paris-based family from Mali deciding whether to excise their infant. Made with support from the French Government and UNICEF and input from many African women, the film was produced in French and four African languages. Presenting all sides of the argument in a compassionate and humorous light, it has been a useful tool to inform and challenge beliefs both in France and West Africa, where it is shown to families, community leaders, doctors, lawyers and judges.

As the discussion on FGM widens and more girls and women learn about their legal rights, an increasing number of Africans living in France agree with Bintou's sister in the CAMS film, who says, "A lot of us women are against FGM now. And the law is on our side."

Young journalists link up in international association

By Lisa Krug

What do you get when ambitious young journalists set out on a cross-cultural mission to communicate with their peers from around the world? GRAPES — or the Bureau of Young GRAPES, to be exact. GRAPES, which stands for global reporters, authors, producers and editors, is a UNICEF-assisted project launched in June 1994 to train and link young journalists around the world.

"Our goal is to open channels so that children can communicate across national boundaries," says Kim Sabo, one of several adults who coordinate the project through the Children's Environments Research Group, a non-governmental organization affiliated with the City University of New York.

Ms. Sabo is also one of 13 staff members — 3 adults and 10 children aged 11 to 18 — who run GRAPES' editorial/planning board, an uneven but determined exercise in democracy. "In our group, we work very democratically," explains Ms. Sabo, whose role is more facilitator than adviser. "Every step in the process is discussed among us all."

For a small board with only a few afternoons and Saturdays to work, they have accomplished a great deal. In one year, they have begun production on two 'how-to' books — one for print and the other for radio journalism — that will include feature articles, stories, art and photographs from their peers around the world. To gather material, they have sent out hundreds of letters and questionnaires.

So far, 50 to 60 child journalist groups from 14 countries have responded to their inquiries. They include a Jamaican group, WECAN, that produces its own wildlife magazine; an all-girl editorial board from Minnesota that produces *New Moon*, a magazine for children; and journalism associations from Austria, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mozambique, among other countries.

GRAPES

GRAPES' participants videotape in their office.

These groups are sharing information about the different social and economic conditions under which they work, as well as more workaday concerns, including how to get a good story, conduct an effective interview and find funding. Many of the youths have sent in photographs of themselves at work, taken with black-and-white film provided by GRAPES.

"The people we get responses from are really great," says 13-year-old Tala, a student at the Institute for Collaborative Learning in New York City. "They are very open about their experiences. I am amazed to see how many kids are into journalism."

Reports of censorship

But recently, the GRAPES New York staff has been upset by reports of censorship, especially one from a South American group that complained about having trouble reporting on child labour in their country.

"In some countries, journalists are suppressed," explains Quynh, a 17-year-old student at New York's High School for Environmental Studies. "The children can't talk freely about how they feel. That's why we have organizations like this — to help kids speak freely."

"Under dictatorships, kids are second-class citizens," says Tala. "I think it's amazing that they persevere despite censorship, and set up their own newspapers and radio shows."

Observations about censorship and other important issues will be included in GRAPES' first book on print journalism, which the group hopes to have published in 1996 in English and Spanish soft-cover editions of 50 to 60 pages.

"We use a lot of art and photographs," Tala says, "so that kids everywhere can understand each other, even if they don't read all that well."

To reach children of different literacy levels, the book ranges in difficulty from simple storyboard illustrations to more complex written text. The radio book will include an audio cassette. Eventually, GRAPES wants to connect child journalists on the Internet.

Support for the project comes from the Norwegian Government through Voice of the Children, an international initiative aimed at increasing children's participation in making decisions affecting their lives. UNICEF provides administrative assistance.

The children involved in GRAPES believe their project will demonstrate to adults that children can perform high-level work. Proving themselves to adults is an important first step in gaining a larger voice in society.

"We're learning how to communicate with children of different cultures," says Quynh, "but we need to learn to communicate with adults, too."

Lisa Krug is consultant editor of the UNICEF Features Service.

Quality books for Panamanian children

By Luis Romero

> *The little campesino climbed down to his house, from stalk to stalk, from stalk to stalk, from stalk to stalk; he opened the door of his house, he looked for his socks, he put them on, and he started to climb from stalk to stalk, from stalk to stalk, from stalk to stalk, until he reached the sky...*
>
> — from "Cuento para dormir a un niño" (A story to put a child to sleep)

This award-winning story is part of a new book called *Cuentos panameños para niñas y niños* (Panamanian stories for girls and boys), a collection of short stories for children by 21 Panamanian writers.

The book, part of an effort to provide quality literature for children, was launched in February at a ceremony in the National Theater of Panama attended by government ministers, legislators, diplomats, writers and representatives of international organizations. Bernt Aasen, UNICEF Panama Representative, invited the participants to "join in a vast alliance to provide quality books to all the schools in Panama," and underscored how important such a collaboration would be in fulfilling the Pact for Children supported by Panama's First Lady, Dora Boyd de Pérez Balladares.

Quality reading material

"Only those who have been good listeners can learn how to tell a story," said Ernesto Endara, one of the writers featured in the book, in his speech at the ceremony. "And only those who have learned to read can learn to write. But what do they read?" Mr. Endara stressed the importance of giving children quality reading material.

He told the audience about the tales he heard as a child from his grandmother Josefa, and mentioned many of the Panamanian stories and writers that have influenced his literary work. Even in the era of television and computers, he said, "you can put well-chosen books in the hands of children and teenagers and they will stick to them like glue."

Some of the works in *Cuentos panameños para niñas y niños* have not been published before; others are famous literary works. The collection also includes the novella "El primer beso" (The first kiss): "Piti Mini observes the wide wooden balcony bathed by the sunlight. So far, the nine-year-old girl has lived a very isolated life, but she feels that everything will soon change."

Some stories are based on Panamanian traditions and native tales. Such is the case of "Isgar," a story about an iguana rooted in the mythology of the Cuna Indians, who live in communion with all forms of life in their natural environment.

The book was published through the collaboration of the Ministry of Education, the Instituto Nacional de Cultura, the Office of Panama's First Lady, UNESCO and UNICEF.

Luis Romero is a communications consultant for UNICEF.

'Meena' in Africa

continued from page 11

must incorporate the characteristic thatched *rondavels*, or mud-brick huts.

Addressing the sensitive issue of female genital mutilation, the subject of one episode, researchers observed the wide regional divergence in the age at which it takes place: 2 years in Eritrea, up to 18 in Tanzania. One participant commented that a story with provocative elements was more likely to be remembered, and consequently to instigate behaviour change, than one that succeeded in achieving consensus at the cost of having its edges rubbed too smooth.

The combination of inspiration and effort that has gone into creating the East African 'Meena' is expected to have its pay-off by mid-1996, with the launching of the first episodes. Much activity will take place before then, including further training of writers and animators and the adaptation of the stories into a radio series. These efforts promise that the series, along with empowering African adolescents, will ensure a pool of talent for further development of communication initiatives.

Julia Spry-Leverton, a freelance journalist from the United Kingdom, has worked extensively for UNICEF. She is currently based in Kenya.

ORT questionnaire educates Peruvians

continued from page 3

on their rounds, and it is amazing how they are received, with such affection and kindness," reports Dr. Miryam Olave Cruz, UNICEF Health Officer in Lima. "The community knows them now. On these visits, the mothers learn all about ORT again, they have the volunteer's name, she tells them where she lives and she gives them ORS. They have everything they need."

The volunteers turn in the questionnaires to health officials, who consolidate them by district and report the results to the volunteers, who in turn report them to the community. Health Ministry staff consider the process a valuable feedback mechanism and have found it useful in spotting problems.

"This is about empowerment through information," says Dr. Monica Sharma, UNICEF Senior Adviser on control of diarrhoeal diseases/acute respiratory infections. "It is a way for people to manage their problems themselves."

Dr. Cruz notes that maintaining a strong relationship between local health centre staff and volunteers is very important, as is social mobilization. Each summer a diarrhoea prevention campaign is launched, with messages broadcast on radio, television and loudspeakers and appearing in pamphlets and posters, which are prepared in the community.

The outcome is encouraging. The number of CORUs has tripled from 5,000 in 1991, during a cholera outbreak, to 15,000 in 1995. The marginalized urban areas are well covered, and efforts are now being shifted to focus on improving the coverage of people living in isolated areas, such as the Amazon jungle or remote Andean hamlets.

The last CORU data collection, undertaken in January and covering 312,000 families, found a 62 per cent ORT use rate. In addition, 82 per cent of the people recognized the ORS sachet and 77 per cent knew how to prepare the salts. CORU data are not statistically representative of the country, and the official rate remains to be determined by the next national survey in 1996. But the outlook is very promising.

Sharon Slater works in the Child Survival Unit at UNICEF headquarters in New York.

Burundi starts to treat invisible wounds

By Christian Smets

The images of dead bodies and fleeing refugees that resulted from the conflict in Burundi in late 1993 were plain to see, as were the ravages to the national economy. Less obvious are the scars the violence etched into the souls of the people, especially the children.

But those hidden wounds have a great potential to jeopardize the nation's future. For that reason, UNICEF has launched a programme designed to deal with the trauma suffered by children during the crisis. The programme, Assistance aux enfants non accompagnés (AENA), or Aid to Unaccompanied Children, was launched in collaboration with the Ministry for Social Action, the NGO Terre des Hommes and other organizations.

The project included a study, carried out in collaboration with the University of Burundi, of how violence affects children's mental health. The study began with a survey undertaken in October and November 1993 by 34 students of the University's Faculty of Psychology. They surveyed 2,770 children under 18 in the provinces of Gitega, Muyinga and Ruyigi. The results of this inquiry are to be used in preparing a manual to help the nation's parents, social planners and educators both to recognize symptoms of trauma and to devise appropriate responses to it.

A 'spotlight' on trauma

The inquiry shone a spotlight on the extent of trauma suffered by Burundi's children. Virtually all children in the study had witnessed acts of violence. Fifteen per cent had seen family members being murdered, while more than half said they had been attacked, and another 15 per cent had suffered either minor or severe injuries.

Of the children who had been attacked, 77 per cent knew their assailants, most of whom were neighbours, which seriously jeopardizes the children's ability to trust people. It is hardly surprising that almost all of the

continued on page 15

UCOBAC supports vocational training and other activities to help young people orphaned by AIDS.

Ugandan group works to reduce AIDS' impact

By Page McBrier

In Uganda, where the effects of war and the AIDS epidemic have left the country with an estimated 1.2 million orphans, child welfare advocates and NGOs have been working together for the past four years under an umbrella organization to coordinate efforts for vulnerable children. The Uganda Community-Based Association for Child Welfare, or UCOBAC, links people and organizations involved in child advocacy, facilitates relations between the Government and NGOs, and helps to strengthen the capacity of NGOs to identify and implement projects.

Offices in 35 districts

UCOBAC began in October 1990 with 93 members, including 57 local NGOs, 17 international NGOs and 19 individual members. Since then it has established local offices in 35 of Uganda's 39 districts.

To date, UNICEF has provided about US$130,000 for UCOBAC activities. UNICEF will continue to fund local NGO initiatives through UCOBAC, but its core operations are to become financially independent of UNICEF within a couple of years.

From the beginning, UCOBAC has emphasized community-based initiatives that allow children to remain in their own communities rather than be institutionalized. "Children belong in the community," says UCOBAC's Programme Manager, Joseph Wangolo, "and we want them to stay a part of it."

For example, in Rakai, one of the districts hardest hit by AIDS, it was found that many orphaned children were struggling to manage on their own, with children as young as 10 to 13 years old heading households. To help them, UCOBAC initiated a vocational skills training programme. Artisans were selected in the community to provide the training, but they were also taught psychological counselling techniques. "We didn't want them to teach these children only vocational skills," says Mr. Wangolo. "We wanted them to care for these children because they were morally affected by the loss of their parents."

Each artisan was given a set of tools appropriate to his or her skill — a bicycle repair kit, say, or brick-making tools. In exchange, each had to train a child from the community in his or her craft.

This pilot programme was very successful, benefiting over 300 children as of December 1994. According to Mr. Wangolo, the challenge now will be to make these children self-reliant. Plans are under way to bring this programme to 10 more districts.

On the district level, UCOBAC is providing training workshops for communities and NGOs to identify and implement viable projects in their communities. One example is teaching parents how to write wills, which are not part of traditional culture.

"The vulnerability of children, especially the AIDS orphans, arises out of the fact that their parents have died without leaving behind any legal document to protect their property in favour of their children," says Mr. Wangolo. "So these children are left destitute."

UCOBAC has also helped various child welfare organizations by serving as a network for sharing information. At its main office in the Ministry of Relief and Social Rehabilitation building in Kampala, UCOBAC staff members publish quarterly newsletters and brochures and produce occasional radio and television programmes. *The Orphan Generation*, a video produced in 1994, addresses community-based care and support for children orphaned by AIDS.

Future projects include an inventory on NGO child welfare projects, which will help identify gaps in care, a child welfare resource library and networking workshops with NGOs and government policy makers.

This year, UCOBAC began addressing gender. "It's very difficult to address the issues of children independent of the issues of women in the community," says Mr. Wangolo. Through small one-time grants, UCOBAC has already trained 450 community leaders in how to teach such skills as bookkeeping and accounting to local women, who traditionally don't manage money.

"Children belong in the community and we want them to stay a part of it."
— Joseph Wangolo

The Veterans Assistance Programme is another project that focuses specifically on women. It works with female veterans of the civil war (ended by a truce in 1985) and veterans' wives who were living in barracks and must now relocate to non-military communities. Studies have shown that these women's families suffer high rates of sickness and death. The failure rate of marriages is also high, especially in cases of tribal intermarriage. Through small grants, these women have been integrated into existing local women's groups that support income-producing projects such as bee-keeping, pig-raising and pottery. This gives these women not only an income but also a place in the community.

With four years of experience, UCOBAC is assessing its progress. Future goals include broadening its funding base and concentrating on greater collaboration, especially at the district level, where people are often unfamiliar with the concept of an umbrella organization. UCOBAC also hopes that it will soon be able to provide more funds to benefit more people with the knowledge and technical assistance its various organizations have to offer.

Page McBrier, a freelance writer and children's book author based in the United States, recently travelled to Uganda.

Mental disorders increasing in developing nations

A group of global health experts warned in May of an alarming level of mental health problems in developing nations.

A study by researchers at Harvard Medical School documents high rates of schizophrenia, alcoholism, depression, dementia and post-traumatic stress disorder caused by war, natural disasters, the abuse and murder of women and children, and by changing demographic, political and economic conditions.

It also finds that suicide is one of the major causes of death among young people.

"Mental health must now be placed on the international agenda," said Dr. Arthur Kleinman, head of the five-member North-South team of experts who authored the report. "Poor and rich nations alike have failed to make the investment needed to restore and preserve mental health."

The authors called for a global summit on mental health to take place in 1996, possibly in a developing nation.

The findings show that the total number of cases of schizophrenia in low-income societies will increase from 16.7 million in 1985 to 24.4 million in the year 2000.

Rates of mental retardation and epilepsy are three to five times higher in low-income societies compared with industrialized nations. In some Asian and African countries, up to 90 per cent of patients with epilepsy, a condition treatable with drug therapy, do not receive anti-convulsant treatment.

From an IPS report.

Computers for sustainable development

National decision-making often uses sophisticated technology to forecast, model, map and track a country's efforts at sustainable development. Yet rarely does this technology take an integrated look at a society or measure such important variables as quality of life or environmental degradation.

Now, a computer model called Threshold 21 is being used to measure the human as well as the economic side of development. Developed by the Millennium Institute, a UNICEF-assisted research group in Arlington, Virginia (USA), it interlinks diverse sectors such as demographics, health care, education, food and nutrition, international trade, national accounts, energy efficiency and the environment.

"How are you going to deal with demographics without addressing the education of girls?" asks Dr. Gerald Barney, Millennium's president. "All these issues are hooked together."

Based on hundreds of previous models used by the World Bank and other organizations, the Windows-based Threshold 21 helps decision makers to both plan for development and build consensus among key groups. It does this by combining data on relevant variables and then projecting the impact of policy alternatives in graphs that can depict such seemingly intangible results as quality of life.

"It provides a masterful analysis of the scenarios into the near and not-so-near future," says Rolf Carriere, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh, where Threshold 21 is being used to analyse programmes such as oral rehydration therapy (ORT), the prime intervention to combat diarrhoea.

"Threshold 21 helps policy makers weigh the relative merits of programmes like ORT against multimillion-dollar projects such as bridge construction," says Dr. Barney, who has been working with Mr. Carriere to train 22 Bangladeshis in use of the technology. Another training workshop is planned for later in the year.

With scenarios developed using Threshold 21, Mr. Carriere hopes to bring together decision makers from government, media, business, NGOs and other key groups to identify common ground and discuss future scenarios.

UNICEF has contributed around US$65,000 to the development of Threshold 21, which costs between US$50 and US$2,000, depending on the size and complexity of the model purchased. The technology can be tailored to analyse a region, sector or programme. Threshold 21 was created in the belief that the major problems of the 21st century — population growth, loss of arable land and depletion of fossil fuel reserves, among others — are best tackled as a whole within the development framework.

"Interconnections are vital for analysing the future," says Dr. Barney. "By making those connections, Threshold 21 helps give leaders confidence and a positive vision of the future. The welfare of children depends on that vision."

For more information on Threshold 21, contact: Dr. Weishuang Qu, Millennium Institute, 1611 North Kent Street, Suite 204, Arlington, VA 22209-2135, USA. Telephone: (703) 841-0048; fax: (703) 841-0050.

UNICEF/1972/Sprague

Through its 56,000 volunteers, Child Pastorate helps more than 1 million Brazilian children get off to a good start each year.

Volunteers give gift of life in Brazil

By Alexia Lewnes

Hildette dos Santos Coutinho approaches three-year-old Bilu, stripped to her cotton underwear, and gently lifts her into the cloth harness of a crude portable scale. As Bilu floats in mid-air, her legs dangling, Hildette announces her weight: a healthy 14 kilos and 300 grams.

Bilu is one of hundreds of children in this community in the north-eastern coastal city of Salvador who benefit from the UNICEF-assisted Child Pastorate of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB). Reaching out to more than 17,000 communities in all 27 Brazilian states, the Child Pastorate, through its 56,000 volunteers, assists more than 1 million Brazilian children and their families each year, mostly in impoverished communities.

Community leaders are the cornerstone of the Child Pastorate, volunteering their time and their hearts to their neighbours. Residing in the communities they assist, these retired teachers and nurses, domestic workers and housewives, struggle daily to reduce infant mortality and improve the living standards of children and their families.

"We are teaching people simple information that can dramatically improve their lives," says Hildette, a former teacher and a Pastorate volunteer for eight years.

Their hours are often long and their work is never easy, yet their mission is clear: to teach families to take responsibility for their own health. These volunteers travel door to door, providing vital information on nutrition, breastfeeding, oral rehydration therapy, prenatal care, immunization, acute respiratory infections, sexually transmitted diseases and the prevention of home accidents. They emphasize at-home treatments and introduce families to accessible and affordable solutions to common health problems.

"Our work is very challenging," says Hildette. "The people here have so many needs, yet there are so few resources."

While Brazil has the largest health service network in Latin America and one of the largest in the world, the Ministry of Health officially estimates that almost a quarter of the population (or 34 million people) lacks access to any type of health care service.

The quality of children's lives varies significantly from one region to another and the disparities can be striking: in the north-east, where infant mortality rates reach levels similar to parts of Africa and South Asia, twice as many infants die as in the south-east.

Dispensing advice and hope

Every month Hildette descends a steep hill, littered with trash and rubble, to reach Maria Magdalena Santos's house. Cracked cement blocks conceal raw sewage that streams between the houses. Here, families squeeze together in makeshift houses. Respiratory infections, malnutrition and even starvation are endemic.

There is no bathroom or clean running water, yet remarkably, Maria's children have been spared the health problems plaguing her neighbours.

"Hildette has taught me about breastfeeding, vaccination, the importance of boiling and filtering water, and keeping food covered to protect it from flies and disease," says Maria gratefully. "I rarely take my children to the health unit because they don't get sick, and if they do I know how to help them at home."

Since beginning its activities in 1983 in a small town in the state of Paraná, the Child Pastorate has had a powerful impact on families throughout Brazil. From 1989 to 1993, infant mortality of children under one year of age was lowered from 53 to 27 per 1,000 live births in the areas assisted by the Child Pastorate, demonstrating that communities can be the agents of their own transformation.

Today, in addition to providing health education, the Child Pastorate also teaches literacy to adolescents and adults, develops income-earning projects and produces a weekly radio programme that reinforces the messages delivered by community leaders. A computerized information system, initiated in 1986, tracks vital statistics on assisted children and their families, enabling local leaders to continuously assess and reinforce their work.

Defeating diarrhoea

continued from page 3

The credibility of ORT and its acceptance by mothers has largely been achieved through the full support of all health professionals.

In 1993, a massive mobilization campaign was launched, targeting national and local medical associations. Regional and provincial conferences that promoted the advantages of ORT and the judicious use of antibiotics were organized, and mailings were sent to all health professionals. Round-table discussions and interviews with medical professors were also broadcast on the national medical cable channel, reaching more than 5,000 physicians, pharmacists, dentists and students.

One year later, the National Federation of Moroccan Pharmacists officially pledged its commitment to join the national campaign, in a declaration signed by members of its 26 syndicates. A comprehensive training programme was begun to train pharmacists about ORS and ORT, and by the end of 1994, 309 of them had attended the four-hour sessions. "It was essential to get pharmacists involved," says Dr. Sergio Soro, UNICEF Representative in Morocco. "They provide assistance and advice not just on health issues, but on all matters. People trust them and their advice is followed."

To ensure access and availability of ORS, a strong and reliable manufacturing programme to produce ORS locally was developed, as well as a comprehensive distribution system. All public hospitals and provincial and local health clinics are adequately supplied with ORS. A fully stocked warehouse in Casablanca ensures that ORS is available for all emergency needs. To reach isolated communities that have limited access to health facilities, mobile units regularly dispense three ORS packets free to all mothers with children under five.

The battle is not over, but Morocco is well on its way to making ORT a family habit. "The CDD programme has demonstrated that to ensure sustainability, all of society must be involved," says Dr. Salah. "It's a challenge everyone must be willing to accept."

Alexia Lewnes, a consultant writer for UNICEF, recently completed an assignment in Morocco. Sérgio Antonio Guimaraes is Information/Communication Officer for UNICEF Rabat.

Haiti's 'Cinderellas' find a friend

By Sonia Goldenberg

Nine-year-old Marceline is one of about a quarter million 'Cinderellas' who keep Haiti's homes running. These young servants, three quarters of whom are girls, are primarily the children of poor rural parents who cannot afford to support them. Known by the Creole name *restaveks*, from the French *rester avec*, or stay with, the children are sent to work, for no pay, as domestics in the cities. Many parents hope that there they will be able to go to school.

But few do. A recent study found that, like Marceline, 75 per cent of child domestics in metropolitan areas can neither read nor write.

Marceline has been a *restavek* in the home of her aunt since her mother died two years ago. Her father is also dead and she does not know the whereabouts of her two sisters or her brother. She spends her days waiting on her aunt and two cousins in their home in a poor area of Carrefour, a town on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. She says her relatives sometimes hit her with a metal stick.

In the morning, Marceline fetches water, prepares breakfast and cleans the house. Next she washes the dishes, while her cousins leave for school. In the evening, after her aunt and cousins eat the meal she has prepared, she gets the leftovers. Then she goes to sleep — not in a bed but on the floor under her aunt's bed. Her second-hand clothes don't fit her well.

"If I had a lot of money," she says, "I would like to buy a beautiful dress and a pair of shoes."

Now, though, there is a place where children like Marceline can go for a break from the harsh routine of their daily lives, where they can meet sympathetic adults and children who face similar situations. It is the Maurice Sixto Shelter, run by Father Miguel Jean Baptiste, a Haitian Catholic priest who has devoted his life to helping the *restaveks*. Every afternoon Marceline goes to the shelter. She is quiet and withdrawn and seems much younger than her age.

"Marceline's story is heartbreaking, but it is not unusual," says Father Miguel. "These kids grow up with no identity, no love, no respect; they are children to be remade." At the shelter, he gives them a chance to speak and to be listened to. He calls it 'de-zombifying'.

Every day at 4 p.m., around 200 *restaveks* aged 6 to 18 come to the shelter. For two hours they attend classes in literacy and handicrafts and participate in a workshop on self-reliance.

Psychiatrist Nadine Bourdet, the only doctor many of these children have ever seen, visits once a week. Dr. Bourdet says the children suffer deeply from the lack of love and from the inferior treatment they receive at home. Psychosomatic illnesses such as stomach upsets and headaches afflict 80 per cent of the children, she says. Their illnesses are a way for their bodies to express the suffering they cannot verbalize. Many *restaveks*, like Marceline, seem physically and mentally retarded for their age, says Dr. Bourdet.

"What can one expect from a child who suffers from chronic malnutrition, is not loved and receives no stimulation?" she says. Nonetheless, she thinks the children must be intelligent and strong to survive their living conditions. She was so worried about a few of them that she took them away, and was amazed to find that their physical and mental development immediately accelerated. Two became the top students in their class, and one jumped a grade.

The Government has no official statistics on *restaveks*, but Father Miguel and others who work with them believe their numbers are growing fast. The *restaveks* are also becoming younger, sometimes as young as five or six, and they are working for poorer families.

According to a UNICEF study, most work for families with incomes of less than US$250 a year. Thus, these children are the last to be served in families that cannot satisfy even their most basic needs.

UNICEF/DO94-0960/Reginault

Marceline shows a rare smile at the Maurice Sixto Shelter in Carrefour.

Haiti has few shelters for *restaveks*. Last May, Father Miguel opened a second shelter in Leogane, a city of 100,000 people south of Port-au-Prince. UNICEF has provided tables, books and a carpentry workshop for his shelters, and has helped other organizations that sponsor education for *restaveks* in Port-au-Prince and Gonaives. UNICEF also sponsored a recent study of child domestics.

The deplorable treatment of *restaveks* continues despite the fact that it violates international regulations regarding practices similar to slavery, forced labour and exploitation of children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (which Haiti ratified in June 1995) obligates the country to protect the child "from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment," including sexual abuse.

President Jean-Bertrand Aristide has brought wide attention to the plight of Haitian street children, but the *restavek* phenomenon remains largely ignored and unaddressed by Haitian authorities. Next year, UNICEF will support local groups in launching a national campaign to sensitize Haitian public opinion on the issue.

Sonia Goldenberg, a Peruvian journalist, recently worked for UNICEF in Haiti.

Burundi's wounds

continued from page 13

children now show symptoms of trauma, such as continual crying, anxiety, depression, apathy and insomnia. Nearly 88 per cent of them reported flashbacks of the violence, and more than a third of the children whose parents were killed said they dreamed of their parents coming back to life. The deep sadness spawned by violence has also left its mark: half the children spoke negatively about their future.

"When I'm alone, everything I lived through and everything I've heard seems to unreel before my eyes, like a movie," said a 14-year-old boy. "I don't know how to make the thoughts go away."

The youngest children express their feelings passively, often regressing to immature behaviour. In their use of language, for example, some lose the ability to speak altogether. Some lose interest in games and sleep poorly.

Aggression is more common among the older children, who are apt to turn to delinquency, the use of drugs or alcohol or, in the case of girls, to prostitution. A desire for vengeance is also growing among these young people.

A small, unaffected minority

A small minority of children appear unaffected by their experiences. This may be due to the Burundian culture, which fosters reserve and the internalization of one's problems. This trait may be a major barrier to helping them, as the basic principle of therapy is verbalizing the trauma. Without talking about it, a person is unable to externalize the trauma, and thereby understand and surmount it.

UNICEF is preparing a manual to help people recognize trauma and to deal appropriately with it. Parents, adoptive families, teachers and social workers need to learn how to respond more effectively to the specific needs of traumatized children.

It is also important to develop a cadre of psychotherapists specializing in trauma, to treat the more serious cases. To support these activities, UNICEF plans to establish a resource centre in Bujumbura, along with operational centres within existing institutions throughout the country.

Education for peace is another route through which UNICEF is helping to overcome the problems arising from the conflict. The aim of this activity is to teach people that disputes can be settled without recourse to violence. It is a long-term effort that ideally should be a part of all the country's primary schools and literacy centres. As part of this activity, UNICEF recently supported 50 performances of a play by a marionette theatre on the theme of peace in Burundi's refugee and displaced-persons' camps.

All of these activities will help the nation to recover. But Burundi's children and adults also need a stable environment and a return to normal activities, such as school and work. Having lost their homes and possessions, many families have been shaken to the core and now lack the wherewithal to see to their children's needs. The many needs of the people cannot be served adequately until stability and security return to the country.

Christian Smets is an information consultant for UNICEF Burundi.

Gearing up to end IDD by the year 2000

By Saudamini Siegrist

The world has the knowledge and capacity to achieve the goal of universal salt iodization by the year 2000. A variety of organizations are now pushing for a concerted effort to focus public attention on both the urgency and the possibility of the task.

One activity in support of such an effort is IDD Day, being launched by UNICEF offices and partners, including Kiwanis International and the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD), among others. The Day is aimed at raising awareness of the effects of iodine deficiency and the low-cost method of preventing it.

"The aim is not simply one day of public interest but the start of a broad movement involving public support at all levels, similar to the recent massive immunization drives," says Mary Duffy, UNICEF liaison for the Kiwanis International effort.

IDD is one of three micronutrient deficiencies that afflict one third of the world's population; the others are iron and vitamin A. Health professionals know that providing micronutrients through food fortification, improved diet and supplementary capsules is the most cost-effective way of maintaining the mental and physical potential of children.

Studies published within the last decade confirm that IDD is the single most common cause of preventable mental retardation, diminishing the intellectual capacities of tens of millions of people. Iodine deficiency is primarily a problem of remote, often land-locked, mountainous regions in Africa, Asia and South America. But it also afflicts the residents of a number of large cities in Asia, including Beijing, Delhi and Manila, and pockets of it also persist in the industrialized world, including Germany and Luxembourg, as well as Eastern Europe.

"Iodine deficiency contributes to under-development by limiting the learning capacity of children," says David Alnwick, Senior Nutritionist at UNICEF in New York. "No country lacking in iodine can afford not to iodize its edible salt supply." Salt iodization costs only 5 US cents per person per year.

A variety of efforts are under way to educate the public about IDD. Some countries are designating an IDD Day in October 1995 to create opportunities for increasing public awareness; others are teaching young people about micronutrient deficiencies in schools and networking to gain support for iodization among public officials and salt producers. Information and advocacy materials are being distributed to UNICEF field offices.

Among the activities suggested for IDD Day are:

- School projects such as testing salt samples, poster and essay contests, panel discussions, science fairs and field trips to local salt producers.
- Publishing newspaper articles, creating radio and television programmes on IDD, and covering IDD events.
- Celebrity sponsorship and entertainment and sporting events with the theme of preventing iodine deficiency.
- Review of existing legislation for inclusion of iodization laws and for enforcement of existing laws.

Saudamini Siegrist is a consultant for UNICEF New York.

RESOURCES

UNICEF Publications
Available from UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, RPPL DH-49B, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Available in English unless otherwise noted.

Community-Based Sustainable Human Development: A Proposal for Going to Scale with Self-reliant Social Development, by Daniel Taylor-Ide and Carl E. Taylor. The first in the Discussion Paper series on primary environmental care, this working document proposes a replicable approach for sustainable development incorporating ecosystem management, meeting basic needs and community environment.

And Children's Rights, published by MENA Regional Office in collaboration with the Tunis-based Arab Institute of Human Rights. Designed to educate children on their rights and create awareness about and interest in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is the first Convention advocacy/information material produced in the region. Available in Arabic only. US$5. For copies, contact the MENA Regional Office. fax: (962) 640-049.

The following publications are available from the UNICEF International Child Development Centre (ICDC), Spedale degli Innocenti, Piazza SS. Annunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy. Telephone: (39 55) 23.45.258; fax: (39 55) 24.48.17.

The Children Here: Current Trends in the Decentralization of National Programmes of Action, by Carlos Castillo with the collaboration of Richard Dunbar. Analyses how and why countries are creating programmes of action at the regional, district and community levels and how this process can more effectively achieve the World Summit goals for the 1990s. 91 p.

Innocenti Occasional Paper

Child Well-Being in Japan: The High Cost of Economic Success, by Martha N. Ozawa and Shigemi Kono. Paper No. 46. Discusses the pressures on children caused by demographic and economic changes and proposes policies leading towards a more child-centred society.

Other Publications

The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics, prepared by the UN Statistical Division. UN Sales publication, US$15.95. For further information, please contact the UNICEF Programme Publications Section (fax: (212) 755-1449), the UN Statistical Office or your local UN Information Centre.

Women and Empowerment: Participation and Decision-Making, by Marilee Karl, UN-NGO Group on Women and Development. The latest in the Women and World Development series, this book addresses how women are mobilizing to participate in the life of their communities. For copies, please write to ZED Books Limited, 7 Cynthia St., London N1 9JF, UK; or 165 First Ave., Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716, USA. Paperback, 173 p.

Women's Health and Human Rights: The Promotion and Protection of Women's Health through International Human Rights Law, by Rebecca Cook. How women are more liable to ill-health than men, and how human rights treaties can be used as a lever to improve women's health in countries that have signed treaties. Available from Distribution and Sales, WHO, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland.

Healthy Women: An Information Guide, produced by Family Care International (FCI) on women's health issues in Africa. Written by a Ghanaian obstetrician, the guide is designed to help health workers provide accurate, up-to-date information to the women they serve and includes chapters on pregnancy and post-partum care, family planning, infertility, adolescent health and sexuality, prevention of STD transmission and the effect of men on women's health. Available from FCI, 588 Broadway, Suite 503, New York, NY 10012, USA. Tel: (212) 941-5300; fax: (212) 941-5563.

Population and Reproductive Rights: Feminist Perspectives from the South, by Sonia Correa. Published with Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), this book presents views of Southern feminists and advocates a holistic view of population issues. Available from ZED Books, Ltd., 7 Cynthia St., London N1 9JF, UK. £10.95.

Stop TB at the Source. Edited by Kraig Klaudt for WHO. This report, aimed at the public and decision makers in developing and industrialized nations, includes case studies and information on TB prevention in a graphic, easy-to-read format. Contact TB Programme, WHO, 20 Avenue Appia, CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: (41 22) 791 2675; fax: (41 22) 791 4199.

Partnerships for Social Development — A Casebook presents case studies in community-based social development from all over the world. Published by Future Generations in cooperation with the Dept. of International Health, Johns Hopkins University. Available from Future Generations, P.O. Box 10, Franklin, WV 26807, USA. Telephone/fax: (304) 358-3008. Paperback, 127 p. US$9.95.

Toolkits: A practical guide to assessment, monitoring, review and evaluation, by Louisa Gosling with Mike Edwards. A guide to help development workers evaluate and monitor their work systematically. Available from Save the Children Fund, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, UK. Telephone 071 703 5400, ext. 2604; fax: 071 703 2508. Paperback, 255 p. £6.95.

Families in Focus: New Perspectives on Mothers, Fathers and Children, by J. Bruce, C. B. Lloyd, A. Leonard. Published by the Population Council. Discusses current trends in families, especially the role of fathers, and how these trends are affecting children. Available from the Population Council, One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA. (212) 339-0514. $12.50.

Children for Health: Children as Communicators of 'Facts for Life' incorporates ideas and experiences gained from Child-to-Child programmes worldwide and is based on the belief that children are able to communicate health messages effectively to other children and adults. Available in English and French. Please contact TALC, P.O. Box 49, St. Albans, Herts AL1 4AX, UK. £2 plus postage and handling.

The Healthy Start Initiative: A Community Approach to Infant Mortality Reduction. The first in a series of booklets designed to show how to develop an effective grass-roots vehicle for improving the pre-, peri- and postnatal health of low-income women. Available from National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, 2000 15th St. North, Suite 701, Arlington, VA 22209-2617, USA.

Adolescent Health and Development: The Key to the Future, prepared for the Global Commission on Women's Health, discusses some of the key issues affecting adolescents and provides concrete suggestions for improving their quality of life. Available from WHO, CH-1211, Geneva 27, Switzerland.

Food Fortification Legislation and Regulations Manual, by Rose Nathan with the support of UNICEF. The manual includes substantive information and how-to instructions on establishing laws and rules to mandate and permit food fortification. (*See next item for ordering information.*)

Iodine Deficiency Disorders Salt Monitoring Kit is a collaborative effort from UNICEF, PAMM and the Micronutrient Initiative with input from WHO, ICCIDD and the ministries of health from several countries. The kit covers monitoring universal salt iodization programmes and includes chapters on performing a situation analysis. Submit requests for copies to: Dair Brown, Program Against Micronutrient Malnutrition, Department of International Health, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, 1518 Clifton Rd., 7th Floor, Atlanta, GA 30322, USA. Tel: (404) 727-5416; fax: (404) 727-4590; email: brown@fox.sph.emory.edu

UNICEF Video
Audiovisual materials are available from UNICEF Offices and National Committees. (Check with your local office for catalogues.)

Safe Motherhood, 4 minutes. This animated film complements the *Facts for Life* initiative supported by UNESCO, WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF. It shows what can be done to reduce risks during pregnancy and can be shown in schools and health clinics and used to train health workers.

First Call for Children

First Call for Children is a quarterly publication of the Division of Information, UNICEF New York. Contents may be freely reproduced with attribution to *First Call for Children*.

Editor: *Catharine Way*
Assistant Editor: *Lisa Krug*
Editorial Assistant: *Hashi Roberts*

Please address all correspondence to: *First Call for Children*, UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, H-9F, New York, NY 10017, USA. Fax (212)326-7768, Telex 175989.

First Call for Children
July-September 1995 issue
UNICEF reference:
CF/DOI/FC/95-003
General reference:
ISSN 1014-9023